

# CINEMA QUARTERLY

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**THE SCENARIO AGAIN.** The publication in book form of the scenario of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* again raises the question of the function and scope of the scenarist in relation to direction, cutting and the whole scheme of production. In his introduction to the present volume\* Ernest Betts, film critic of the "Sunday Express," claims that the publication of *Henry VIII* introduces a new form of literature. He also denies any knowledge of the meaning of "true cinema." These statements, taken together, are symptomatic of much that is wrong with cinema to-day—an inability to escape from the narrative form of literature and an unconcerned ignorance of the true nature of film form.

If the function of the scenarist is to create the film on paper and of the director to re-create it on celluloid, it would appear that either the one is being denied his rightful recognition as the real progenitor of the production or the other is being given undue credit for work which is interpretive rather than creative. This is more or less the case, except that the scenarist, being a writer rather than a visual artist, often lacks ability in the use of plastic imagery and expressive sound, which the director with a real understanding of the powers of his medium would employ in preference to the wordiness of literary narration. In actual practice the director has the power to alter the script as he thinks fit; but a work conceived as a whole by one creative imagination cannot be altered by another, working on a totally different plane, without disastrous effects.

The separation of scenario-construction and direction into two different functions is an artificial one, introduced originally because the first producers were showmen or technicians who could no more conceive a story than they could act the juvenile lead. The system is continued partly out of habit and partly because most of the original producers are still in control of the studios. The accepted idea that the film is a "collective" art is also responsible for a continuance of the convention. The production of a film undoubtedly demands team work. So does the erection of a building. But without

\* London: Methuen, 3s. 6d.



an architect to inspire the draughtsmen and instruct the builders, the result would lack that æsthetic harmony which characterizes all great architecture. Similarly, unless a film is dominated by the supreme personality of a creative artist in undisputed control over every stage of production it will suffer from weakness of character and uncertainty of design.

The question is not whether the scenarist or the director should be given command, for obviously the same person ought to be responsible for both tasks. But until something is done to break down the present stupid conventions and make possible the development of new genius capable of undertaking the wider responsibility of full creative control, it is idle to talk of the scenario as having significance either for literature or the film.

**COLOUR ARRIVES.** Six years' practice of the use of sound has brought us only to the fringe of learning how to use it with artistic perception—and now we are faced with colour. At least five separate systems, each with elaborate claims to recognition, are already competing for introduction to the screen, and whether we like it or not the colour-film will soon be an accepted form of cinema. That directors have still enough to learn about sound and movement, that the audience has never asked for colour nor felt the want of it, that exhibitors do not welcome the cost of installing new apparatus—all that is beside the point. The film of entertainment, declare the producers, requires another infusion of novelty, and just as sound was thrust on the cinema by the competitive genius of Warner Bros., the black-and-white film may soon be swept from the screen by the flood of colour released by avid producers anxious to dazzle their rivals.

That they may also dazzle the audience is equally possible. Judging from efforts such as *Radio Parade* and the final reel in *The House of Rothschild*, colour definition is still far from perfect, and the essential qualities of tonal harmony and contrast are apparently unknown. Cautious second thoughts made Gaumont-British withdraw the colour sequence in *The Iron Duke*, but Hollywood rushes ahead with all-colour versions of *Becky Sharp*, *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *The Three Musketeers*. There are no second thoughts in America. And soon the rest of the world will be stampeding in its wake.

Much as we may regret its precipitous imposition, we cannot afford to scoff and ignore the advent of colour. Its development is as inevitable as the development of sound. Even Chaplin, lone champion of the silent film, has been able to remain staunch to his former medium only by the subtlest of compromise. Is it not better



for everyone, theorists and craftsmen alike, to face the matter frankly and give timely consideration to the possibilities and dangers of the use of colour? Only thus will it be possible to avoid the chaos and insensibilities which followed the commercial exploitation of sound.

**CENSORSHIP AGITATION.** A deputation led by the Archbishop of Canterbury and representative of the various uplift organizations throughout the country recently waited on the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the Secretary of State for Scotland, to urge the setting up of a Government Inquiry into the working of film censorship in Great Britain, with power to recommend constructive reform and improvement of the present conditions.

A similar deputation headed by Bernard Shaw and representative of the radical intellectuals of the community might reasonably have presented the same request. Both bodies of opinion agree that the existing censorship is a farce. It is too lax. It is too rigid. It winks at indecency. It stifles art. It pleases nobody.

Do we require a stricter censorship or a more intelligent one? Or none? In reply to the present agitation the Home Secretary is officially reported as indicating "the difficulty of reaching general agreement on a matter largely of taste." Even the righteous and omniscient Mr. MacDonald declared that "Inquiries, particularly, perhaps, where any question of morals is involved, did not always yield all the results expected of them." He ought to know. The suppression of political propaganda, of course, is much simpler than dealing with matters of morals. There are methods. . . .

But Wardour Street may rest in peace.

NORMAN WILSON.

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# THE MUSICIAN AND THE FILM

WALTER LEIGH

ALTHOUGH from its earliest beginnings the cinema has employed music as an important part of the entertainment which it offers, the place of music has been an almost entirely subordinate one. In the latter days of the silent films, certain super-productions were presented at the big theatres with specially composed music played by large orchestras, and just before the sound-film arrived, some experiments on a small scale were made in synchronization of the film with a mechanical organ or piano, and a synchronous apparatus was invented for the conductor of the cinema orchestra. But excess of zeal on the part of the musician often caused the musical accompaniment to obtrude itself too persistently on the consciousness of the audience, and the enjoyment of some films was considerably impaired by noisy orchestras which, in seeking to create appropriate atmosphere, would often stress and underline unnecessarily the action of the film.

The sound-film arrived just at the right time to save an embarrassing situation. Its success entailed the acceptance of a new convention by the audience, the make-believe that sound actually proceeded from the shadows on the screen. This effort of reconciling sound with sight was readily made by the audience, and the apparently impossible—a "talking picture"—was achieved. For the first time the audience, in order to understand the entertainment, had to listen as well as to watch. Hitherto they had only noticed the music when it somehow disturbed them; and they were aware of its absence if a film was run in silence. But now the sound was no longer a mere accompaniment, but an integral part of the film; and for the first time they became sound-conscious.

Unfortunately, however, this miracle of synchronization was so universally emphasized by film producers that little advantage was taken of the possibilities offered by the new mechanical device. Indeed, at the present time, some six years later, the majority of films still show how great a set-back film production suffered from



the coming of sound; long stretches of dialogue are synchronized with the moving faces of the speakers, all the natural sounds are carefully synchronized with their corresponding visuals, and the result has the effect of a stage play observed through a telescope; the advantages which the film has over the stage are exploited hardly at all.

In consequence of this restricted use of sound, the audience's sound-consciousness, which made such a promising start, has not been allowed to develop; indeed, the decline in popularity and virtual abandonment of the theme song seems to show that the sound is listened to less consciously than it was. On the other hand, now that synchronized sound is no longer a novelty, there are signs of the development of a new technique in the use of sound, not merely as an explanation to the ear of what the eye is watching, or as a background to keep the ear pleasantly occupied while the eye devotes itself to the action, but as a part of the action itself, as expressive in its own way as the visuals, and a necessary complement to them. And it is in this field that the musician can prove of direct use in the making of a film, and take a more responsible part than hitherto.

It is beginning to be recognized that discipline is as necessary in sound as in picture. Whereas the picture is carefully cut with due regard to form, rhythm, and emotional effects, the series of natural sounds which are normally synchronized with the picture form only a random string of words and noises, some helpful to the sense of the picture, some an adequate but no more than discreet accompaniment, and some actually disturbing in their effect. The eye is accustomed to constant changes of focus, and finds their effect pleasing; but the ear is not thus accustomed, and finds the abrupt shiftings from sound to sound, which follow quick changes of scene, difficult to accept. Moreover, there is an important difference between the sound heard in the cinema and that heard in the ordinary theatre. When watching a stage play, we select for ourselves, out of the sounds which proceed from various parts of the stage, those which we are to listen to, such as dialogue and revolver-shots, and disregard entirely all the unimportant sounds such as the footsteps of the actors, clicks of cigarette-cases, striking of matches, and shutting of doors. But in the cinema, all the sounds, proceeding as they do from a single point, the loud-speaker, are listened to with equal attention, with the result that sometimes a particular sound, say of footsteps, may be charged with a sinister meaning that is quite unintended. Every sound in a film must be a significant one; there is no room for extraneous sounds. Therefore the effect of each sound must be properly and carefully calculated.

The musician, then, the specialist in sound and its emotional



effects, must be brought in to organize the sounds into a score in which the effect of each one is calculated in relation to the picture and to the other sounds. He will do well to abandon many musical conventions on which he has been brought up, and attempt to approach this new problem of film-sound as a fresh art with many unexplored possibilities, which is only now starting to make its own conventions.

He finds four kinds of sound at his disposal:—

- (1) Music.
- (2) Natural sound, synchronized (including speech).
- (3) Natural sound, used contrapuntally.
- (4) "Sound effects," for emotional or atmospheric purposes.

(1) *Music* undoubtedly fulfils certain functions which nothing else does: it can excite the emotions more powerfully than either spoken word or natural sound. This is because its significance is conventional and imaginary. It is an artificial organization of sound for purely emotional purposes, a representation of physical movement in terms of sound and rhythm. In a film it may be either given its full weight, and perhaps, at emotional peaks, even be allowed to dominate the picture, or it may have only secondary importance as an atmospheric background, possibly with other more important sounds superimposed. The composer approaching the film problem for the first time will be struck by one especially important fact, namely, that in film-music more than in any other kind of music the greatest virtue is economy. A phrase of five bars lasting twenty seconds suitably fitted to thirty feet of picture may express as much as a whole slow movement of a symphony. One minute is quite a considerable length for a piece of music in a film. The academic principles of leisurely formal development are therefore of little use in the composition of film-music, though they may well be employed in the construction of the whole film and its sound-score. The same need for economy applies to the instrumentation; four instruments may well provide a better effect than forty, and a piece that would sound painfully thin and ridiculous in the concert-hall will be perfectly satisfactory over the microphone. It may be said without presumption that the peculiar powers of the microphone have, with the exception of one or two isolated experiments of which little notice has been taken, not been exploited to much advantage up to the present. The most obvious possibility is that of balancing, by placing at suitable distances from the microphone, those instruments whose normal volumes are entirely unequal. The film-composer has to recognize that the much-despised "canned" quality of film-music is actually its most important characteristic and greatest virtue.



(2) *Synchronized natural sound* makes its appeal to the reason; its effect on the emotions is incidental. Its main use is to help on the action; it has largely taken over the functions of the sub-title in the silent film. Being *ipso facto* tied to the visuals, its value is dependent on them: it does not, as music does, add anything which is not inherent in them, but only amplifies and explains them. Its effect is particularly satisfying in the case of marked rhythmic movements which obviously produce a noise, such as hammering; the audience, having made its necessary effort of make-believe that the sounds are actually produced by the shadows on the screen, feels disturbed if its expectations are disappointed. Similarly, if the facial movements of speech are prominent on the screen, the audience is justified in its desire to hear the words spoken, and will feel irritated if those words are not in perfect synchronization. It is not, of course, by any means necessary that the actual sound made at the time the picture was shot should be used. In post-synchronizing a film it is often found that a particular noise is more satisfactory when reproduced artificially in the studio. In this field the microphone has been far more exploited than in music.

(3) The use of *natural sound in counterpoint* is a new device, and the most important development since the coming of the sound-film. It makes a special demand on the audience's power of concentration, in that they must be ready to listen to given sounds as bound up with, and yet separate from, the picture. It is, in fact, an appeal to the emotions through the reason. Its use is similar to that of music, whose appeal to the emotions is direct; but the value of the sounds, instead of being intrinsic as in music, is allusive. The *sense* of the sounds is related to the *sense* of the picture, and a specific emotion results. This use of sound is not a mere stunt; it is essential to the further development of the sound-film, a step towards a new and far more expressive form of film art. When sound has achieved its proper freedom, the film will be justified in claiming the place once held by opera.

(4) The use of *sound effects*, not allusively, but so to speak musically, for directly emotional purposes, follows as the next step after the contrapuntal use of natural sound. The possibilities in this field are as yet unexplored, but it is clear that since the vocabulary of the sound-composer comprises all the known sounds that it is possible to record, there is nothing to prevent his orchestrating other than purely musical sounds to produce certain effects. Since Satie employed the typewriter in *Parade* there have been several instances of non-musical noises combined rhythmically with music, and in films the noise of a train as a percussion basis to music, and the Hans Sachs method of hammering as in *Man of Aran*, are fairly familiar. But the more subtle use of noises for their own sake, to



create certain atmospheres in the same way as music does, has still to be developed, and it is undoubtedly in this field that the most creative advances and the richest discoveries will be made.

In the film *The Song of Ceylon*, an attempt has been made to make use of the above suggestions in constructing a sound-score which has a definite shape, and not only is an accompaniment to the visuals, but adds an element which they do not contain. The film has, in fact, been cut throughout with an eye to the sound-score. Its form is musically conceived; an analysis of its four movements would read like that of a symphony. Each sound has been selected for its seeming inevitability, as harmonies are in music. Even the commentary is calculated as an effect and not as a necessary nuisance. The chief aims of the sound-score are simplicity and clarity. The audience's difficulty in co-ordinating sight and sound has been recognized, and confusion has been avoided as far as possible. Two kinds of music have been used: the native singing and drumming for realistic purposes, and the western orchestra in an attempt at a palatable combination of Sinhalese and European idioms, for atmospheric and emotional purposes. The two extremes, music and synchronized natural sound, are used respectively for emotional high-spots and points of rest. Non-synchronized sound is used a great deal for various specific purposes. An example is the distant bark of a dog heard during a shot of a native building a hut; the implication of the dog is a hint at village life not far away, and the effect of the combination of picture and sound in their context is to foreshadow a contented domestic life in the house now being built. The sound of a train is continued over a shot of an elephant pushing down a tree, and slowed up to correspond with its efforts. Morse and radio announcers reciting market prices are heard over shots of tea-pickers, sounds of shipping over the gathering of coker-nuts. Sinhalese speech, being presumed to be unintelligible to the audience, is used purely as a sound with its obvious connotation, except where a close-up of a speaker demands synchronized speech.

One or two experiments have also been made with the microphone. The vibrations of gongs have been picked up by swinging the microphone close up to the gong after it was struck. Some percussion instruments are used whose virtue is only discernible through the microphone. A particular attempt is also made at an instrumentation suitable for "canning." And all the natural sounds have been artificially produced in the studio, occasionally by very unlikely means. That it shows examples of a few of the possibilities offered by an entirely new approach to the whole problem of sound is the chief claim of the film.



# THE FUNCTION OF THE ART DIRECTOR

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI

FIRST of all, why are sets generally used in films? Often the scenes which they represent exist in nature and could be shot. There must be strong reasons for the widespread practice of building sets when nature itself is readily available. Money is not the deciding factor. On the one hand, it cost more money to shoot *Madame Sans Gene* in the Palace at Fontainebleau than it would have cost to build three times the number of sets for the same script in Hollywood. On the other hand, elaborate and expensive sets are often built when the real scenes can be shot more cheaply nearby.

Sets are not built either out of necessity or economy. There are other reasons, some psychological, some practical. First there is the question of how the set affects the acting. Most directors find that they get better acting on a set than they get from acting in real surroundings. After all, most film actors have been trained on the stage where they have been accustomed to working among scenery. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should feel more at home on a set than against a background of real life, and that their style of acting should agree best with artificial surroundings.

But the chief reason why sets help the acting lies deeper still. A lack of ease in acting in natural surroundings exists even in those without a stage training. When among the objects of everyday life actors are apt to be hampered by a feeling of incongruity between the artifice of their action and the reality of their surroundings. This affects not only theatrical and stylised acting, but also the more casual acting peculiar to cinema. Even when shooting people in their ordinary movements, it is sometimes possible to get a more unified effect and a stronger feeling of reality by placing them on a set. One peculiar advantage, for example, is that on a set they seem to forget the camera more readily. But the director also benefits from working on a studio set. There he is independent of the chances of the outside world; free from the noises, interruptions and discomforts which ordinarily interfere with work on a real



location. He has a greater control over circumstances, and his mind is freer to concentrate on essentials. (When Sickert was asked why he never painted in the open air, he said that it was because he found it more difficult *to rule lines* out of doors).

The practical and technical advantages of using sets are, in fact, the advantages peculiar to the studio itself. It is built for making films. There is direct contact with administration, organization is easier, and there is centralization of staff and props. The actors have dressing-rooms which presumably give all the necessary facilities for making-up. There is everything to help the work of the sound engineer and the cameraman. And perhaps the most important factor of all is the complete command over light and, in particular, top and back lighting, which the organized arrangement of the artificial set affords. This last affects the control over the image, which is the essential of camera work; the power to detach it by nice degrees and if necessary isolate it from its surroundings. Back light thrown from above and behind the set is the most effective control possible to the cameraman. It can create infinite stages of relief and is fundamental to any development of photographic style.

Since there are so many reasons for employing sets and since cinema affords so many opportunities for learning from experience, it is surprising that of all the departments of film work the study of set building has been the most neglected. Except to follow vogues in decoration, sets have hardly changed in conception from their original primitive forms.

We are not considering how accurately sets may be got to imitate nature, nor are we considering how they can be used to create atmosphere. The essential problem is to see how sets may be considered and built from first to last for the development of a truly cinematic point of view.

The set builders whom most producers employ are old studio retainers who hold their job through custom rather than for any particular skill or developing knowledge in their work. When producers do cut adrift from such unimaginative labour they usually call in painters, architects, stage set designers or interior decorators. None of these men have a knowledge of the special factors governing cinema set building. They pass designs made in their own professional manner to some hack art director who in turn passes them on to carpenters without proper adaptation.

The art director should be as alive to the action of the film as the director himself. In his own field he should have as much initiative and scope. Just as it is the special job of the director to guide the dramatic course of the actors to the shape and style of the whole film, it is for the art director to use his own non-human material to the same end. And to do his work properly he must be fully



aware of all the possibilities of sets and lighting, so that he may exploit each of them to the full.

With regard to the set itself, the first law to be laid down is that it must be built to be lit. That is to say, you must never look upon a set as having an existence independent of the lighting which will reveal it. The set, not as it is, but as it will appear, is the thing. The films of Vidor, Dreyer and Chaplin are uncommon for their understanding of the first principles of set building. In Chaplin's *Woman of Paris* the excellence of the sets was due almost entirely to their full response to the lighting.

The failure of art directors to reckon enough with light has prevented them from adapting their ways of building sets to the changes which lighting has undergone as cinema has developed. The hard white arc lights and the mercury banks of the early cinema gave maximum contrast and hardness to the photography. With the coming of panchromatic film and wide-angle lenses a softer incandescent light is used which gives a much less defined image. This change should have been followed when necessary by a harder and more rigid construction of set. Instead, through lack of enterprise on the part of art directors, all sets now appear with a uniform and monotonous softness.

Similarly, in its lack of adaptation to the changes in camera technique, set-building lags behind. In the early cinema the set confronted the camera as a stage confronts its audience. The camera, stationary and at eye level (its only variants being a cut from long-shot to mid-shot, mid-shot to close-up), demanding a complete stage set with its three walls. Since that time the camera has lost its immobility. But nothing has been done in set building to exploit the possibilities of the modern camera with its new battery of pans and trucks.

Sets could be constructed which would give the camera far greater freedom of movement. But they cannot be, till art directors fully appreciate the camera point of view. The use of special angles should also be properly appreciated by art directors. They might then consider the possibility of making sets of floors and ceilings, with the back light coming in one case from above and the other from below. They still unfortunately hug the side walls only and are, to that extent, as firmly glued to stage tradition as the theatrical people themselves.

The question of scale is also important in set building. The relation of scale between parts of the same set must be considered, and, what is less obvious, the scale of one set as compared with another. It is a very common fault for exteriors to bear no relation to their corresponding interiors, particularly when interior sets are used in conjunction with real exteriors. Small house exteriors are fre-



quently given huge rooms; and over-sized settings which originated in an appeal to the snobbery of the audience, have become the monotonous rule. In practice the smaller sets have given the best results. Though they are more difficult for the technicians they are easier for the actors and for the directors. And they usually look more convincing. The use of wide-angle lenses can give them a depth and distortion: a quality of perspective, indeed, which is new and peculiar to cinema. As such it ought to be exploited. This deeper knowledge of lenses is of primary importance in the construction of sets, and one may say that no set should be designed without some understanding of the lenses used in the various shots. The size of the lens is as important as the placing of the subject.

Another point: the preoccupation with depth has obscured the fact that the projected image is inevitably a flat image. The emphasis is no longer on the volume, but on the line. In every composition, therefore, and every sequence of compositions, the play of lines is important. The dominant lines, straight or curved, vertical, horizontal or diagonal—have a dramatic and emotional significance which affects the montage and construction of a sequence. No art director can ignore it. The jumpiness and lack of rhythm in such otherwise finely staged sequences as the dancing scenes in *The Merry Widow* and *Gay Divorce* are due almost entirely to this confusion between set volume and projection line.

The problem is so complicated that one may well understand why the line of least resistance has so often been taken and why the old stage set, made rather for the eye of the director than for the lens of the camera, is still in general use. But the exciting possibilities of what we might call the camera set as distinct from the stage set must sooner or later be exploited by all intelligent directors.

## EISENSTEIN

It is announced that Eisenstein is preparing a massive film to portray the history of a proletarian family in Moscow over a period of five hundred years. Since his Mexican misadventure, Eisenstein—who is the subject of the cover illustration—has confined his activities for the most part to lecturing at the State Kino Institute (G.I.K.), where his pupils, whose courses extend for three years, have included a number from countries outside the U.S.S.R. A note in the "Moscow News" observes that an important factor in Eisenstein's work has undoubtedly been the photography of Eduard Tissé, who is not a Russian but a Scandinavian. "A cameraman on various fronts during the World War, Tissé donned Red Army uniform and filmed the Civil War and Revolution on many fronts, under conditions of extreme danger and difficulty."



# DEFINITIONS IN CINEMA

CLIFFORD LEECH

I FULLY appreciate David Schrire's insistence on exactitude of terminology,\* for the two chief causes of confused thinking in criticism are the use of an inexact terminology and the incursion of political and religious prejudices into the domain of the critical intelligence. By all means let us clarify the meaning of "documentary," but Schrire is sailing under a full canvas from the rocks of vagueness which are Scylla into the Charybdis which is prejudice.

"If cinema is to mean anything it must serve a purpose beyond itself, have some justification other than its own very medium," says Schrire. This might be questioned, but let it pass. He continues: "If that is true, there is one purpose above all others that is of paramount importance to-day—that of making a living." And here assuredly I must part company with him. By all means let us make films of our distressed areas (it is well that our civilization should know the truth about its decayed teeth), but there are many things in life, both good and bad, which rival hunger in importance. The fear of death, the joy of mating, the conversation of friends, the glory of achievement, the tedium of routine, the quiet normal horror of egocentricity—all these are of as much importance in the life of every individual man or woman as the problem of how to eat and where to sleep. I see no reason why the term "documentary" should be restricted to the presentation of the most obvious of man's interests.

Schrire, inconsolable, admits that it is probably too late to exclude Flaherty's pictures from the documentary class. Then let us not attempt to establish artificial distinctions which have not been recognized in the past and cannot be recognized in the future. Instead, we may find it instructive to make a classification of documentary films according to their two basic features: the nature of the material and the approach to that material.

Here, then, are some definitions:

"A documentary film is one which sets out to convey an impression of a phase of contemporary reality." Perhaps the words "or past" should be added after "contemporary." I am in favour of widening the definition rather than narrowing it, but historical films have so far had little to do with reality. Categories other than documentary include the fantastic (*Caligari*, *Warning Shadows*, *The*

\* "Evasive Documentary," *Cinema Quarterly*, Autumn, 1934.



*Waltz Dream*), the satiric (*A Nous la Liberte, Le Dernier Milliardaire*), and the stylised (Lubitsch). These classes might be profitably subdivided, but also clearly overlap.

"The term *theatrical*, in the vocabulary of the cinema, may be applied to all films which use trained actors and/or studio sets."

Similarly, "the term *naturalistic* describes films in which the actors are untrained and are merely directed to reproduce for the screen the way of life that is ordinarily their own, and in which the settings are not created for the purpose of the film."

"*Realistic*, as in literature, describes the approach of the director who concentrates on faithfully reproducing the surface-aspects of reality—who takes reality at its face-value."

"*Romantic*," similarly, "describes the approach of the director who believes that there are many facets of reality and that he may reproduce for us whichever of them he will." Consequently the romantic director generally shows more individuality of style than the realistic director, who should suppress his own personality in his attempt to catch the surface-truth. Moreover, let the warning be given; there will always be many who will deny the truth of a romantic's vision of reality. But deliberate falsification is neither realistic nor romantic.

We may now look for, and find, four classes of documentary:—

(1) Romantic theatrical.—Clair in *Sous les Toits* and *14 Juillet* is the most famous exponent of this type. I do not know whether Dovzhenko was using untrained actors in *Earth*; if not, that clearly romantic film should be included here.

(2) Realistic theatrical.—Here one could give many examples:—Bruno Rahn's *The Tragedy of the Street*, Roland Brown's *Quick Millions*, Pabst's *Westfront*.

(3) Romantic naturalistic.—Certainly we must place Flaherty here, and with him perhaps Eisenstein, who, as far as I have seen, has rarely tried to confine himself to the presentation of the one-planed external. A glance at the published scenario of *Que Viva Mexico!* should strengthen this view.

(4) Realistic naturalistic.—Here is the true, the "pure" documentary, which we find in Ruttmann's *Berlin* and *World Melody*, in Turin's *Turksib*, in Joris Ivens' *Radio*, and the rest of their kind. But is it so pure? Was Ruttmann's suicide incident in *Berlin* a slice of reality, and was the woman actually drowned? Did Turin's geometrical instruments actually, and normally, gyrate for the delight of the camera? There is, indeed, no hard and fast line of distinction between the ordering of existent material and the assembling of new material, and for that reason I have insisted on the "theatrical" classes of documentary. The purpose, as Schrire has it, is all. Pabst and Turin are together here, as perhaps are Clair and Eisenstein.



# A NOVELIST LOOKS AT THE CINEMA

LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON

PERHAPS, in the interests of truth and alliteration, this should read  
A Philistine looks at the Films.

As becomes a good Scots novelist, I live in a pleasant village near London; and, in the intervals of writing novels for a livelihood and writing history for pleasure, I attend of an evening the local cinema. It is popularly known as the bug house; the jest having long staled, there is no longer even a suggestion of vocal quotes around this insulting misnomer. For it is certainly a misnomer. The seats are comfortably padded, even for ninepence; a girl with trim ankles and intriguing curls comes round at intervals with a gleaming apparatus and sprays the air with sweet-smelling savours; the ash-trays are large and capacious; and it is amusing, in the intervals, to brood upon one's neighbours and consider the wild growth of hair which furs the necks of women who neglect the barber.

But at this point the Big Picture comes on. In the first hour we have witnessed two news reels; a speech by Signor Mussolini, simian and swarthy (why has Hollywood never offered him adequate inducements to understudy King Kong?); shots of a fire in a London factory, taken from the roof of a nearby building which was surely a public-house owned by a pressing philanthropist, so desperately poor is the photography and so completely moronic the camera-man in missing every good angle of vision; and No. CVII of Unusual Jobs, showing the day-to-day life of an Arizonan miner who has turned an empty gallery into a home for sick and ailing bats. Then has followed the Travelogue.

Travelogues in English bug houses (for I'll keep the homely misnomer) deal with only two portions of this wide and terrible planet of ours. We are never shown the Iguazu Falls or the heights of the Andes or the snows on Popocatepetl; or North Africa and the white blaze of sunlight across Ghizeh; or S. Sophia brooding over Constantinople; or Edinburgh clustered reeking about its hill; or London in summer; or the whores' quarters in Bombay; or the bleak and terrible tracks that were followed by the Alaskan treks of '98; or Mohenjo-Daro, the cradle of Indian civilization; or the Manger in Bethlehem at Christmas time, with the pilgrims swop-



ping diseases on the holy stones; or the pygmies of the Wambutti; or the Punak of Borneo, a quarter of a million of them, naked, cultureless, happy, the last folk of the Golden Age; or the dead cities of Northern England, cities of more dreadful night than that dreamt by Thomson; or. . . .

We are shown instead, wearily, unendingly, *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseam*, the fishers of Iceland and the dancing-girls of Bali. A strange, unrecorded tabu has smitten the travelogue-makers; the rest of the earth, those two islands apart, is forbidden their observation. So, with faith and fortitude, twice a week, we sit in the bug house and watch Iceland—mostly female Iceland—grin upon us over the salted cadaver of the unlucky cod; we gaze upon unending close-ups of gigantic buttocks bent in arduous toil; we blink upon geysers and giggling Scandinavian virgins. . . . Or, in Bali, we watch the Devil Dance. The girls appear in masks; the novice film-fan deplures these masks till later he sees a group of the girls without them. Then he understands that even the devil has an æsthetic eye. . . .

Next, Mr. Laurel and Mr. Hardy have entertained us with a desperate vigour. They have sawn themselves in halves, fallen down chimneys, eaten gold-fish, married their sisters, committed arson, or slept in insect-infested beds. And gradually, whatever the pursuit, the grin has faded from our faces. We are filled with awareness of a terrible secret unknown to the lords of the films: that the dictum on art being long and life short was never intended for injudicious application to a single-reel comedy. . . . Mr. Hardy has discovered fleas in his bed. Excellent! We laugh. The flea has infested the skirts of the Comic Muse since the days of Akhnaton. But Mr. Hardy is still horrified or astounded. Yard upon yard of celluloid flicks past, and we await fresh developments. There are no fresh developments. The film, we realize, was made for the benefit of a weak-eyed cretin in whose skull a jest takes at least ten minutes to mature.

Then we have had Mickey Mouse . . . and remember Felix the Cat. Rose-flushed and warm from heaven's own heart he came, and might not bear the cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame, as Mr. Swinburne wrote. But some day, surely, he will return and slay for us this tyrant. How long, O Lord, how long?

But now the Big Picture is coming. First, a lion has growled convincingly or a radio tower has emitted sparks or a cockerel has crowed in a brazen I-will-deny-thee-thrice manner. The heraldic beasts disposed of, we come to the names of the producer, the scenario-writer, the costumier, the sound-effects man; we learn that Silas K. Guggenheimer made the beds, Mrs. Hunt O'Mara loaned the baby, and Henryk Sienkiewicz carried round drinks. The fact





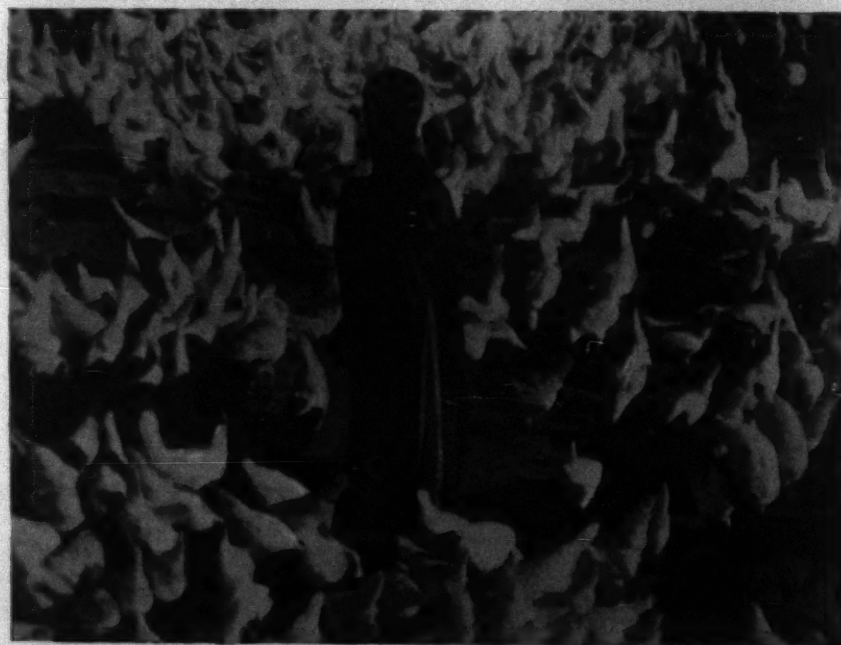
From  
Alexandrov's  
"Jazz Comedy"  
a Souyoskino  
production



From  
"Woman from the  
Mountains,"  
a new Russian film  
directed by  
Ertogrul Muksin

Courtesy of Marie Seton





From  
"Three Songs  
about Lenin"  
directed by  
Dziga Vertov

Courtesy of Marie Seton



that we here in the bug house care not a twopenny damn for any of these facts, that we never remember the names except as outrageous improbabilities in nomenclature, is unknown to Hollywood or Elstree. . . . It is bad enough to have the printer's name upon one's novels. But what if he printed page after page in front of the title, telling how Jim Smith set the type and Rassendyll Snooks read the proofs and Isobel Jeeves typed the correspondence, and the printer's boy who had belly-ache was treated with a stomach-pump in St. Thomas's?

Lists of actors and characters, confusing, and (a noted name or so apart) quite meaningless. Then, with tremolos, a distant view of New York—always the same view, film directors gallop madly round to each other's studios to borrow this shot. . . or a distant view of London; also, always the same view. Then—the picture. . . .

Like most intelligent people I prefer the cinema to the theatre. Stage drama has always been a bastard art, calling for acute faith from the audience to supplement its good works. The film suffers from no such limitations; it presents (as is the function of art) the free and undefiled illusion. A minor journalist and playwright of our time, St. John Ervine, denies this with some passion. His flat-footed prose style (relieved by a coruscation of angry corns) is employed week by week in a Sunday sheet to carry bulls of denunciation against the Whore of Hollywood. (Can it be that Hollywood has refused to film Mr. Ervine's works as—with a far greater ineptness—it has refused to film mine?) But Mr. Ervine's poor tired feet are needlessly outraged. The Whore has righteously our hearts—if only she would practise the courtesan to the full, not drape her lovely figure in the drab domestic reach-me-downs of stage drama.

Too often—in fifteen out of twenty of the Big Pictures that reach our bug house—she is clad not even in reach-me-downs. Instead, she is tarred and feathered or sprayed with saccharine in the likeness of a Christmas cake; and unendingly, instead of walking fearless and free, she sidles along with her hands disposed in a disgustingly Rubens-like gesture.

But—we had *Le Million*, and enjoyed its cackle; we had *Gabriel Over the White House*, the courtesan in dust-cap and mop, spring-cleaning her back-garden as even a Muse must do. We had *Man of Aran* which—apart from the fact that the characters never had any sleep and the sea suffered from elephantiasis, and every gesture and every action was repeated over and over again till one longed to go for the projector with a battle-axe—was a righteous film. And a month ago we had *As the Earth Turns*, which ought to be crowned in bay, in spite of some deplorable photography and an occasional sickly whiff of sugar-icing.

Between whiles our Big Picture is the Muse in tar and feathers.]



# JEAN VIGO

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI

JEAN VIGO came from the Basque country. His grandfather was an important official in the little state of Andorra, and his father was the famous Almereyda, one of those pre-war figures who have since become legendary.

Vigo inherited the strength and energy of these men. He belonged to the vigorous and care-free type of Pyrennean mountaineer. He had the sense of scale, the feeling for the contrast between great and small, which belongs to those who come from little isolated countries.

He also inherited the personal charm of his father, who, according to those who had known him, was one of the most charming men in the world. Like his father, Vigo had a great many friends. Although very reserved, he once confided to one of them that he had taken his first infant steps in a prison during the Great War. In this prison his father was "suicided." From this grim childhood Vigo carried with him for the rest of his life a bitterness which was to dominate all his work.

Now at the age of twenty-nine he is dead.

He started his career in a photographer's studio, and later became an assistant camera-man. Then he founded a film society at Nice, and did his first work as a director in *A Propos de Nice*, which he qualified with the phrase *point de vue documenté*. After coming to Paris he first made *Taris the Swimmig Champion*, and next went on to write a script for a more ambitious film on tennis with H. Cochet; but the difficulties which surrounded young French directors forced him to abandon this. It was then that he set to work on what is perhaps his most complete film, *Zéro de Conduite* (*Nought for Behaviour*).

The Paris Censors considered this film to be an outrage against the educational institutions of the nation, and, declaring it to be harmful to children as well as to the good name of the Schools of France, forbade its exhibition in public. A Press show followed in which the film aroused open hostility.

The bourgeois sentiments of the audience were deeply shocked by the behaviour of the children as shown by Vigo. During the projection the house-lights had to be switched on several times, and the show ended almost in a free fight. In Paris, highbrow audiences have the courage of their convictions.

*Zéro de Conduite* is the only film about children in which no com-



promise of any kind is made with the sentimentality of the so-called commercial cinema. Vigo had courage to show children as seen by themselves, and better still, grown-ups as seen by children.

The majority of the English critics who saw this film at the Film Society completely misunderstood it and took it for a comedy. The poetry which runs through the film escaped them, as did the truth of the presentation of children in their relations to one another. *Zéro de Conduite* had the spirit of revolt and the harsh satirical outlook which is common to all sur-realist work. For although the sur-realist leaders in France never recognized Vigo as one of the "pure of heart," nevertheless, the scenes in the headmaster's study, those of the afternoon walk and of the dormitory can be quoted as perfect examples of sur-realism, just as a poem by Eluard or a painting by Max Ernst, and better, perhaps, than the films of Bunuel.

After *Zéro de Conduite*, Vigo prepared a whole series of scripts and worked out all kinds of financial schemes; a film with Blaise Cendrars, another with G. de la Fouchardière, whose *La Chienne* had impressed all of us, as well as a film on the convict settlements with Dieudonné.

Delays and disappointments could not discourage him; he stuck to his work. At last he managed to get the production of *L'Atalante* moving. It was an important film, and Vigo might have imagined that he had passed the period of his worst difficulties.

The work of the film is conceived and carried out with the greatest enthusiasm. The Hungarian actress, Dita Parlo, who had worked for Pommer, the great French comedian, Michel Simon, Dasté of the *Compagnie des Quinze*, who had played already in *Zéro de Conduite*, and Gilles Margaritis, also from *Les Quinze*, whose work was to be a revelation, form the cast. The music is composed by Maurice Jaubert. The subject is vast and simple. Kauffman's camera work is superb. So *L'Atalante* has every chance of success.

The film is finished. Vigo falls seriously ill. Everyone round him knows that he is doomed. His wife and his friends do all they can to lighten his sufferings. Meanwhile, *L'Atalante* is put into the hands of the distributors. The sur-realism of its story with a barge for a hero against a severe background of canals frightens the trade and it insists on making a box-office version.

A theme song is added of which the title is self-explanatory, "*Les Chalands Qui Passent*." This title becomes the title of the film, and as a final insult, close-ups of a popular music-hall artiste are superimposed more or less throughout. The mutilation of his work is a torture to Vigo during the last weeks of his illness.

Such was the life of one of the most gifted of young French directors. He could have made great films. He possessed enormous powers not only of imagination, but also of action. And above all, he had



the gift of finding a true poetry in the world of the camera. This poetry of reality was his contribution, and it is the chief justification for films to-day. With the French film industry in its present state his loss is a serious blow. In the French studios such men as he are rare.

From a child in prison with his father, Jean Vigo developed into a man greatly in revolt against the injustices of his generation. Harassed ceaselessly by the Censors and the trade, he personifies the progressive film director in his fight against the stupidity and hypocrisy of the ordinary cinema-world.

## CHAPLIN'S NEW FILM

MACK SCHWAB

WHILE Hollywood contemplates deserting black-and-white films for Technicolour, and continues to stuff its productions with dialogue, Charlie Chaplin slowly creates his second non-talkie picture since the advent of sound.

Untitled as yet, his movie is being shot silent. Music and perhaps rhythmical dialogue similar to the opening shot in *City Lights* will be dubbed in afterwards. The story has an industrial background, and concerns a tramp, who gets a job in a factory, becomes enmeshed in the machinery, falls in love with a girl, only to have her leave him in the end. Familiar Chaplin stuff. It should be ready for release in the spring.

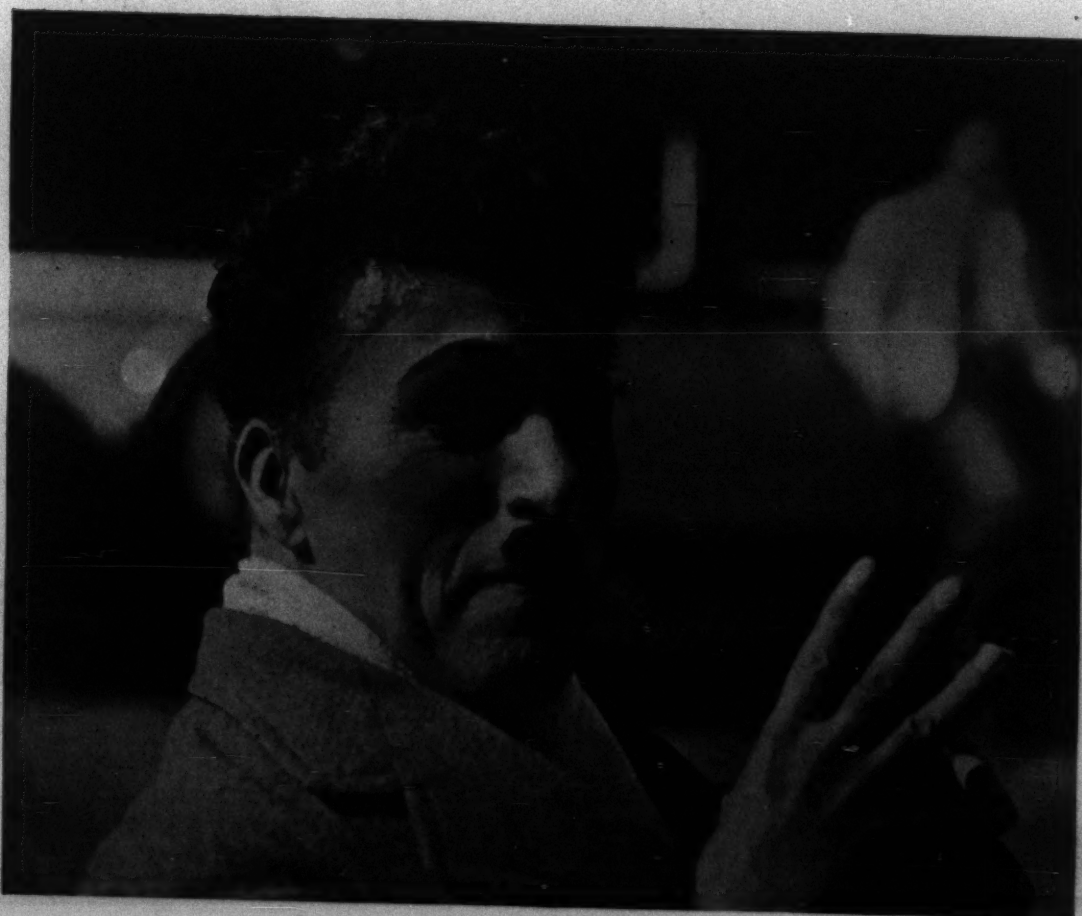
I was on the set during a prison sequence. Chaplin gets there through a gag appropriate to the present day. He saw a red flag drop off the back end of a lumber truck. He picked it up, and waving it, called the driver to stop. A police riot squad with tear gas and clubs mistook him for a Communist inciting revolution, and clapped him in jail. Chaplin likes the easy life of jail so much that he refuses to aid a prison break—in fact he succeeds in spoiling the prisoner's escape.

It is very exciting watching Chaplin rehearse. The scene is slapstick, with guards and some prisoners (one of whom is a hard-boiled





From the  
factory sequence  
in Chaplin's  
new film

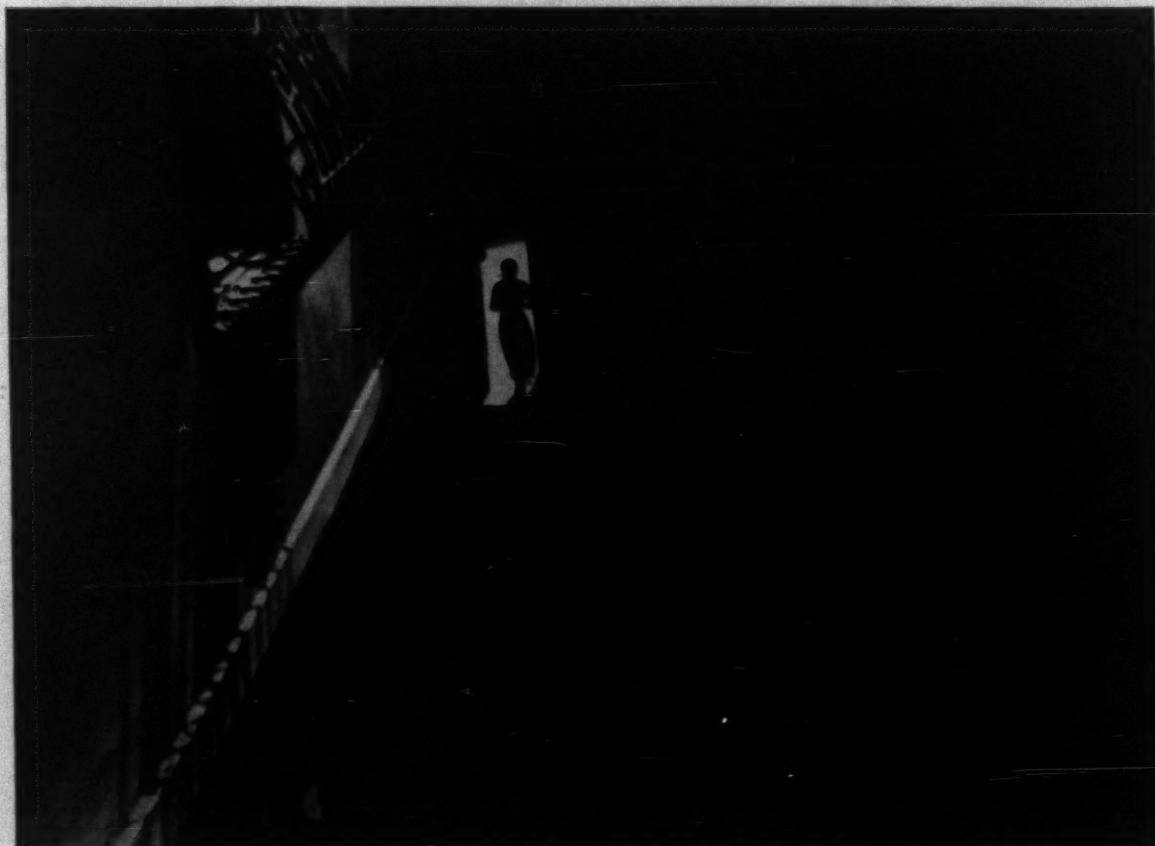


Chaplin  
on the set  
during production  
of his third  
and as yet  
untitled  
sound-film





From "Il Canale Degli Angeli," a Venezia-Film Production  
directed by Francesco Pasinetti from a scenario by P. M. Pasinetti





giant whose hobby consists incongruously in composing delicate needlework). Chaplin acts out the movement of each character, plays his own part and then the parts of those who come in contact with him. Over and over for hours the action is rehearsed. There is talk, but the sense is clear in the pantomime. Chaplin himself speaks only occasional monosyllables. Quietly, patiently, he moulds the scene into a rhythmical whole. Cues, pauses, steps, gestures are exactly learned. "Wait until he's crossed over to there. Then you come here. No, stall until the cue. That's it. Now we'll try it again," he says with a soft mellow good-humoured voice. Again, and again, and again. Chaplin worries over a movement, considers, paces out steps. Gags are improvised. Chaplin hands the giant his embroidery as the latter is led off by the guards. The material at hand is made use of. Chaplin starts to lean against the bars, only his hand passes through, and he stumbles. The prison door is used to knock out a few of the prisoners.

While Chaplin plans out the action, he senses the place and time for the close-ups. He shoots a long key-shot, and breaks it up into close-ups for emphasis. His script is completely worked out, key-shot by key-shot.

Finally he is ready to see the effect he has worked out. His assistant director acts as his stand-in, and takes his place in the action. Chaplin watches through the camera. An amusing contrast, his assistant is plump middle-aged, with glasses. Chaplin laughs at one of the gags. "That's good!" he says about a comical chorus of hands reaching through the bars at his assistant who holds a revolver. Corrections are made. He is satisfied. He asked for a glass of water and a cigarette. Pause after the long strenuous rehearsal. The huge prisoner is dripping with sweat. Some one leans over and offers advice. Chaplin thinks the suggestion good, and incorporates it.

"Now, boys, we're going to take it," Chaplin says. You can hear the camera motor, as you can't of course in sound movies. A revolver, which must be thrown to a certain spot, does not reach it. Cut. The revolver fails again. Once more. The whole action is run through. Chaplin is not satisfied. Five times. Finally it is done.

Chaplin shoots from five to twenty-five takes for every one used. In *City Lights* three hundred thousand feet of film were shot for the seventy-five hundred on the screen. Chaplin does his own cutting. Literally, he cuts it piece by piece in the cutting room. Last Sunday he was cutting and splicing all day.

He composes his own musical score. In fact, he does everything. Most of his co-workers have been with him since he began making independent pictures.

There is only one Chaplin in Hollywood.



## THE FILM ABROAD

# THE AMERICAN YEAR

KIRK BOND

As I write, at the end of the year, the lists of "ten-bests" are being drawn up and will shortly appear in the papers. They promise to include some excellent pictures. *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *The House of Rothschild*, *One Night of Love*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Judge Priest*, *What Every Woman Knows*, *Viva Villa*—these will be found in most lists. Most lists, on the other hand, will not include *Blood Money*, *Fog over 'Frisco*, *Dubarry*, or *The Firebird*, a quartet which, with the somewhat more eligible *Crime Without Passion*, possibly comprehends the best filmic work done in America this year. There are, of course, *Cleopatra*, an admirable antique; *The Scarlet Empress*, an imitation of Gance on a drunk; *Our Daily Bread*,\* cruelly exposing the limitations of Vidor; and *The Merry Widow*, Lubitschean only in the title; as well as Milestone's pot-boiler *The Captain Hates the Sea*, and the usual cartoons. But it would be difficult to find five other films which contain as much good material as the quintet I have mentioned.

Some, who will admit the merits of Brown and the Hecht-MacArthur-Garmes combination, may wonder at the other three. Yet I doubt if, save Brown, there is another director in America with the creative ability of William Dieterle. In the old days he was a UFA star. He played the Poet in *Waxworks*, and Valentine in *Faust*. In Hollywood he began on foreign language versions, turned to original productions, and achieved his first success in *The Last Flight*, some three years ago. The following year he produced *Six Hours to Live*. In both films he added to an admirable sense of continuity an extraordinary atmosphere of ghostly horror and madness. It was like nothing that had ever been done before. The terror of lunacy that lurked in the one, the eerie unreality of the other, were terribly real, not simply fantastic effects. If there was a likeness, it was to Stroheim. Behind both lay the same curious and frightening sense of spiritual confusion, the same desperation of a man lost in a wilderness. Dieterle was yet some way behind the director of *Greed*, but the similarity was apparent.

Last year, for his one important film, Dieterle completely forgot the deep issues of the two earlier pictures, and produced the utterly charming *Adorable*, all cake-icing and Dresden china, and one of the finest things of its kind since *Cinderella* and *A Waltz Dream*.

This year he has made nothing of lasting importance, but each

\* Known in Britain as *The Miracle of Life* . . . Ed.



picture has had good things in it that make it filmicly more interesting than many films more entertaining and more satisfying in the round. *Fog over 'Frisco* was particularly distinguished by its breathless speed and constant movement. It is the fastest film-drama I know. Of the two pictures of the fall and early winter, *Madame du Barry* (as we are asked to call it) is the more enjoyable. I know it will not make the lists, and yet I can hardly see why. Probably because it is "smart" or "flippant"; for the standard of American film-critics is unbelievably high, too high to be true. One could write a small book about their point of view. They, the critics, were unanimous in praise of the eminently respectable *Berkeley Square*, because it was what *they* thought *educated people* thought was genuine "eighteenth century." *Dubarry*, on the other hand, is not, yet to me it is the best eighteenth century I remember since Leni's *Man who Laughed*, and only inferior to the first *Dubarry*.

It is just lively enough to be convincing. There is no obvious effort to go back two hundred years. One is simply there, and not bothered by a specious solemnity or an equally specious hilarity injected for the sake of "atmosphere," both of which helped to spoil *Jew Suss*. Reginald Owen's "After me, the deluge," is that miracle of speeches, an historic remark that actually sounds true. And if Dolores del Rio is no one's idea of the favourite, she is yet a very satisfactory baggage, and a plausible *Dubarry*. The only objection one might have is that the continuity is too fast for a leisurely age. Yet even this suits well with the intricate imbroglio which provides the plot, and is evidently meant to be enjoyed rather than understood.

*The Firebird* is not such a good picture. It is, for the most part, smooth but undistinguished. Dieterle introduces, however, in the little fellow, who could not say whether he had heard a gun-shot (for "A gun-shot! Ho! A gun-shot is soon over—bang—like that, but this terrible noise all day, hammering, people shouting, policemen . . ."), a relative of the mad aviators in *The Last Flight* and the trembling secretary in *Six Hours*, and the shot of his banging on the door, seen beyond an enormous stuffed pelican which fills half the screen and nods at each attack, is one to be remembered. It is so frantic, so desperate, yet so helpless.

Is it fanciful to see in this chaos of Stroheim and now Dieterle something of more than individual importance, something fundamentally American? Is it a coincidence that the close of *Greed* is essentially the close of *Moby Dick*? or that the at times symbolic unreality of *Six Hours* echoes Hawthorne? These are deep questions, but they do not seem wholly unjustified. However, they cannot be answered here. For the present, it is enough to express the hope that we shall see still finer Dieterles.



## ACTIVITY IN GERMANY

GERMAN education authorities have decided to introduce the cinema as a means of instruction wherever films can speak more impressively to the learning child than any other medium. For the thorough organization of this new method of teaching a special government bureau has been created. This *Reichs-Stelle für den Unterrichtsfilm* will supply some 60,000 schools with 16 mm. projectors. The production of the necessary films will be entrusted to suitable directors under the supervision of an expert teacher. The films will be chiefly silent and will be supplied to schools accompanied by a textbook containing explanations, short lectures, literature and other material for the teacher. Every school child throughout Germany will contribute 20 pfennigs towards the realization of this plan.

Another educational film organization just formed is the *Reichsvereinigung Deutscher Lichtspiel-Stellen*, which aims to develop the cinema as a means of cultural and instructional entertainment. Affiliated to it are over 3000 other bodies, such as educational associations, scientific organizations, cultural societies, sporting clubs, religious film societies. Attached is a profit-sharing renting organization and an information bureau which advises societies regarding programmes, etc. Foreign as well as German films of worth are given support. *Man of Arran* and *Palo's Bridal Trip* (Danish) have already drawn record attendances. Besides the erection and operation of special educational cinemas in the principal German cities, the cultivation of the full-length feature educational film is one of the main objects of this new organization.

Among forthcoming films planned by Ufa is still another version of the life and death of Joan of Arc, whose part will be played by Angela Salokker of the Munich State Theatre. A musical film on the youth of Johan Sebastian Bach is to be produced for the 250th anniversary of his birth. Another German composer, Weber, will figure in a new Cicero film, *Invitation to the Dance*. The central figure in another film will be Oliver Cromwell, under whose iron rule England had an early experience of dictatorship.

Emil Jannings, who has recently returned after an absence of several years, has just finished a Deka film, *The Old and the Young King*, dealing with the conflict between Frederic the Great and his father. Europe Films has announced the production of a film founded on the life of Rembrandt.

One of the most important events of the present season was the premiere of the Bavaria-Tofa production, *Peer Gynt*, at the Berlin Capitol. Hans Albers plays the principal part. The direction is by Dr. Wendhausen and the photography by Carl Hoffman.



## MISCELLANY

### I.C.E.—A REPLY TO G. F. NOXON

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

If it is true that the film, like other things in this world, needs an international court of appeal, whose intervention conciliates the clash of interests and national egotisms, and which applies to every new production in the sphere of the film an assessment of value uncoloured by self-love and the patriotic pride of the country of origin, then G. F. Noxon has done the film, and thereby all of us, an ill turn. He declared, in the last number of *Cinema Quarterly*, that the International Institute of Educational Cinematography in Rome, the sole international institution concerned with films existing at the present day, is of absolutely no use, not even for Fascist propaganda, which at Mussolini's behest and under cover of the League of Nations, it is supposed to carry on. In short, it is a sheer waste of money.

Noxon is trying by this means to undermine the moral support, which is as necessary as the financial, to an institute of this kind. Therefore the readers of *Cinema Quarterly* may be willing to permit one whom they know as a friend of the art of cinema, and who has had an opportunity to form his own opinion about the matter under dispute, to present a short statement of the position.

What work is the Institute doing? It has made a comprehensive collection of books and periodicals; it has promoted a number of congresses, among them the International Congress of Educational Films last April, at which forty countries were represented; it organized the International Exhibition of Film Art in August 1934 in Venice; it has published twenty-one pamphlets in five languages, and it issues a monthly magazine and a bulletin, *Les Nouvelles Cinématographiques*. But it is not on all these things that I wish to lay stress, since their significance depends obviously on whether they are well or badly done, and on that point everyone can form his own opinion. I wish rather to emphasize three aspects of the work of the Institute, as to whose value there can, in my opinion, be no dispute.

After working for four years, the Institute has achieved a customs agreement whereby all films, recognized by the Institute as having educational value, may be sent from one country to another free of customs duty. This agreement has, so far, been signed by twenty-five countries, including France, Italy, America and Great Britain;



it has been ratified, so far, by six countries.

At the Baden-Baden and Stresa conferences, in May and June 1934, the Institute brought about a standardization of the sub-standard film. The new norm under the title "Standard I.C.E." has been accepted, up to now, by the British (*sic*), French, German and Italian film industries. The consent of the Americans is to be expected.

In collaboration with outstanding experts in all countries, the Institute has collected the material for the "Film Encyclopædia," which will make available, in three large volumes, a detailed account of the technical development, art, history, economics, politics and legislation of the film. Only by brief indications can I suggest here what a unique aid will thus be placed at the disposal of all those interested in films. The "Encyclopædia" covers forty-five subjects, each of which is further divided into a number of sub-headings. Here are a few of these topics, chosen at random: history (æsthetic, economic, technical); the film in various countries; styles; types of material; the documentary film; the scientific film; the educational film; film production; the shooting of films; apparatus for filming; the moving camera; position; lighting; photography; film architecture; film manuscript; acoustics; uncut films; development and copying; montage; renting; the cinema theatre; projection; legislation; the state; the public; social aspects; film amateurs, film societies; the cinema press; directors; producers; actors. . . . The completed work is to contain about three thousand headings in alphabetical order; some of them occupy only about five lines, others equal a substantial volume in themselves. The section on "Film tricks," for example, contains the description of 110 tricks under as many sub-headings. Of the more exhaustive articles one may mention: The History of the Film (Earl Theisen of the Hollywood Film Museum), The Technique of Film Photography (Guido Seeber), The Chemistry of the Film and Electro-acoustics (the scientific experts of "Agfa" and "Telefunken"), The Art of Make-up (Max Factor), Film Architecture (Erno Metzner and Hermann Warin), The Silent Film, The German Film (Andor Kraszna-Kraus), The European Film (Paul Rotha). If I may be permitted a personal allusion, the headings of the section "Æsthetics" which I myself wrote, including such topics as: the sound film, montage, lighting, movement, the colour film, the film author, would, if put together, form a larger volume than my book on "Film." And I am by no means the only contributor to the æsthetic section of the "Encyclopædia"!

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to the fact that the journal of the Institute has been appearing since 1st January 1935 under the title "Intercine," in an entirely new form. It goes beyond the narrow limits of the educational film to furnish a monthly survey



of everything new that has been done and written in the sphere of the art, technical achievement, economics and politics of the film.

Noxon calls the Institute a piece of machinery for Italian propaganda. I have been working for over a year in the Institute. I am a foreigner and believe myself unbiased. In all cases I have been in a position to observe that it was Luciano de Feo's endeavour to secure the collaboration of outstanding men in all countries and to make use of the material supplied by them in the true spirit of international objectivity. Why, in spite of all this, should the Italian Government find it to its interest to subsidize the Institute? Well, in my opinion, because it would enhance Italy's prestige if so important a factor in modern life as the film had its international headquarters in Rome. Rome is anxious to become again what it once was. Is this explanation adequate?

## CAMERA MOVEMENT

THE first essential of a moving-picture is necessarily movement. This has two aspects: an objective, that is to say in the material surveyed; and a subjective, that is to say in the eye of the camera. The purpose of the latter may be said to be the active interpretation of the former—working in such a way as to bring out by selection and emphasis special points of detail or of subjective mood.

No film, it is clear, can be made without an intimate interplay of the two elements; but it is also true that it is the second which chiefly distinguishes the film from other dramatic forms; and it is therefore with this that we are here concerned.

Subjective movement in a film has two alternative renderings. It is possible for us actually to follow the progress of the camera from point to point; or we may cut out the intervening stages and concern ourselves only with the points of rest. This latter method, in the use of which movement is achieved by the flashing from one stationary set-up to another, and which leaves everything to the cutter, is that favoured by such Russian directors as Pudovkin and Eisenstein.

The common usage of the Russians, to whom moving-camera shots are anathema, is completely opposed to that prevalent in the Western cinema. Here and in America, every other shot taken is a moving-shot; and at the same time the potentialities of constructive editing are to a great extent simply ignored. Somewhere between the two extremes come the better of the Continental directors: Clair, Pabst, and, if we may include him among the Continentals, Lubitsch.



Since the Russians have earned for themselves the reputation of knowing more about cinema than any others of our time, it will repay us to consider their reasons, theoretical and otherwise, for neglecting a method which, it would seem, has nothing but a positive enlargement of scope to offer us; which, indeed, to all appearances, contains something absolutely vital to the film.

Pudovkin, in his book, *Film Technique*, says: "When we wish to apprehend anything, we always begin with the general outlines, and then, by intensifying our examination to the highest degree, enrich the apprehension by an ever-increasing number of details." Proceeding from this, he goes on to explain how in the film we have to eliminate the effort involved in the normal advance from general to particular, and aim always directly at the emphatic point. This he refers to as an "elimination of the points of interval."

But such an account of the processes of apprehension and conscious observation is surely only partially valid. Perception, even when it apprehends detail, apprehends it against a background: the latter only penetrates to a minor degree, perhaps, but it is definitely there. It is this fact that the hammer-emphasis of the perpetual cross-cut close-up denies; and that the technique of the moving-camera, linking up point to point and giving us in the transition background as well as detail, reaffirms.

We are given to understand that the moving-camera shot is rejected because it tends too much to remind the spectator of the camera's presence. In actual fact, however, it only does so when abused (as, unhappily, it so often is); and in any case the argument is a weak one, for does not a procession of ingeniously strung-together close-ups equally recall to the spectator the omnipresent hand of the editor? Either way, thorough-going naturalism is defeated. Such naturalism, constantly pursued by certain of the Russians though it be, is a Jack-A-Lantern which can never be captured.

The camera must make its own pattern, as Pudovkin has said. The only thing is, that unless we intend to deal with pure abstractions we must still retain the impression and a good deal of the form of recognizable reality. That is why I press the claims of the moving camera, and assert that the eternal unvaried stationary close-shot inevitably degrades itself, becomes bewildering and meaningless. Over-emphasis is as bad a fault as under-emphasis. The particular becomes significant only when thrown up in relief against the general, the relatively unimportant.

Practical objections to the moving camera are of a different type. They are based mainly on the great expense of the preparations frequently required; and also no doubt partly on the marked misuse to which the method is subject in the West.





Above—Annabella in "Marie," a Hungarian film directed by Paul Fejos

Below—One of the lavish sets in "The Dictator," a forthcoming Toeplitz Production directed by Victor Saville, with Madeleine Carroll and Clive Brook in the cast







**Elisabeth Bergner in "Escape Me Never,"  
a new British and Dominions film directed  
by Paul Czinner**



On the whole, I regard moving-camera shots and constructive cutting as inseparable for a completed effect. The ideal is an alternation according to a previously-elaborated scheme of moving and static shots, the one or other predominating with the trend of mood and intention. In this connexion it is to be noted that the camera should hardly ever cease to move *in the middle of a shot*. It has the effect of a retardation, a throwing-back of the spectator into his seat: it does what the Russians deplore, reminds us of the camera. The only correct way to bring a camera-movement to an end is to cut the whole shot against a static shot from a different position.

A. VESSELO.

## MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL

COMMENCING on 20th February there will be held in Moscow a Film Festival at which a series of the most recent Russian sound-films will be exhibited, together with a selected number of European and American productions. Facilities will be offered for a study of the development of the Russian cinema during the past fifteen years, and special travel arrangements have been made by Intourist Ltd., who will grant a reduction of fifty per cent. on their ordinary fares to visitors attending the Festival. There will also be a reduction on the cost of accommodation in Russia.

The Russian films to be exhibited will include *The Youth of Maxim* (Kostintseff and Trauberg), *Peasants* (Ermler), *Hot Days* (Sarchy and Henifer), *New Gulliver* (Ptushko), *The Private Life of Peter Vinogradoff* (Macheret), *Love and Hate* (Gendelstein), *Komsomol* (Ivens) and several Meshrappom colour shorts.

## BOOKS

MAN OF ARAN. By Pat Mullen. (London: Faber, 8s. 6d.)

"Man of Aran" is an excellent tale and to some extent a good record of film production. Pat Mullen gives Maggie, Mike and King their share of fineness and bravery. Mr. and Mrs. Flaherty are portrayed as grand people, but Pat fails to express Flaherty's importance to this particular film and to films as a whole. To appreciate this importance, the difference between Flaherty and a studio director must be understood. On ninety-five per cent. of the films made in studios the director is not an essential. He is merely a financier's mouthpiece. Flaherty's importance to a production and to the development of films can be judged by the history of *Nanook*. Flaherty landed twenty years ago in a frozen country. His equipment, compared to modern stuff, was crude. He had a wooden Bell Howell—



the thirtieth made. In three months with the help of two Eskimos he had built a lab. and cutting room. His water was got from an ice hole and carried in gasoline barrels on dog sledges. He printed with reflected sunlight and turned his acetylene projector by hand. Eighteen months later Flaherty was thawing out in New York with the first documentary ever made. Very few critics of the time realized the size and importance of the foundation Flaherty had laid. Very few do to-day.

Pat Mullen does not pretend to criticize. He realizes that Flaherty is a great man and wisely does not pass judgment.

JOHN TAYLOR.

**THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII.** Story and Dialogue by Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis. (London: Methuen, 3s. 6d.)

At last a complete scenario has been published in book form. While admitting the excellence of the precedent, however, one must admit that there is little of technical interest in this little volume. It may be supposed that the editing by Ernest Betts has resulted in considerable simplification of the actual working script. Descriptions of scenes and technical terms are cut down to a minimum and printed in small italics (like stage-directions in a play) leaving the dialogue as the reader's main interest. Even under these conditions, however, some significant facts emerge. There are 239 scenes in the film, as compared with about 2000 in such films as *Jeanne Ney* and *Storm over Asia*. Of these, seventy-six are silent. Most of these are unimportant detail shots. Of the remaining 163 scenes, by far the greater number have no interest apart from the dialogue. These figures give some idea of the extent to which the ear has encroached on the province of the eye. Most of the methods by which the genuine film gets its effects are here necessarily excluded. One cannot do quick-cutting with an average scene-length of twenty seconds, and if there is no quick-cutting, slow-cutting is meaningless. The relations between scenes are of the most straightforward type imaginable: effects of juxtaposition are naturally absent. The one faint-hearted attempt at a crescendo climax is considered mostly in terms of sound. The scenario, says Ernest Betts in his introduction, "reads very like a play."

G. F. DALTON.

**THE STREET OF SHADOWS.** By Elizabeth Coxhead. (London: Cassell, 7s. 6d.) A novel of the film trade in Wardour Street and of the studios in Germany at the end of the silent era and the coming of sound. Some of the characters are well-known personalities—directors, actors and critics—but thinly disguised; others are synthetic figures with certain clearly recognizable traits belonging to more than one notable character in the industry. An interesting and at times amusing, if never deeply illuminating, volume.



## FILMS OF THE QUARTER

# SPIRIT OF EXPERIMENT

FORSYTH HARDY

THREE FILMS emerge from the quarter's cinema: because they are experiments and because, without experiment, no art can make progress. Under commercial conditions, experiment is expensive and hazardous, and seldom undertaken, even when the necessary imaginative ability is present; thus experiment is found most often in work not inspired only by a desire to amass profit—in the products of State-aided film units and in pictures made independently as mediums of personal expression.

The G.P.O. Film Unit has followed *Pett and Pott* and *Weather Forecast* with a more elaborate experiment in the expressive combination of visual and aural images—*The Song of Ceylon*. The direction is by Basil Wright, and in shaping the material he worked in close co-operation with Walter Leigh, Grierson and Cavalcanti. The special achievement of the film is its complete breakaway from the conventional narrative form and the substitution of a form of construction in which sound plays an essential part. If this non-visual continuity is not sympathetically appreciated, the film may well appear, as Charles Davy suggests, "meandering instead of marching." So unconventional is the form of the film that its peculiar quality is not immediately apparent. Few experiments in art are completely assimilated at the first contact, though it is the exception for a film to be, because of its subtlety, incapable of instant understanding.

A second experiment of the quarter is *The Idea*, by Berthold Bartosch, based on a book of wood-cuts by Frans Masereel. This, an attempt to use the cartoon form with a serious purpose, is probably the result of an independent artist's desire to obtain complete and continuous control over the film as a medium of expression—the sort of control he cannot have under studio conditions. The theme of the film is the birth of an idea and its reception by, and effect on, society, and the action is represented by two-dimensional figures against backgrounds at different levels which give depth to the scenes. The film does not attempt to define the idea, contenting itself with illustrating its reception; but its success in this limited achievement suggests that the cartoon form is capable of adaptation to a serious purpose, and that the conventional film form is not the only one available for the artist with something to say.



The third film which seems to have the spirit of experiment is *Men and Jobs*, one of the new Soviet importations. The title indicates one of the film's departures from convention, judged from the standards of the Western cinema, where it is exceptional to find themes concerned primarily with man and his work. But the film further reveals that the Soviet directors are fully conscious of the expressive possibilities inherent in the sound-strip. More often than not sound is used as a comic commentary, naturally and without affectation. For example, when a schoolroom is made of a workers' train, the engine, unseen, is heard puffing and groaning appropriate comment while an engineer-pupil faced with a knotty problem in elucidation fumbles and flounders. The sequence on the train is the most effective piece of sound-film craftsmanship in a picture whose technical quality, though often high, is not sustained. Its evidence of enterprise gives the film a refreshing vigour seldom found in the stereotyped product of the Western studios.

In the commercial cinema there is at present a tendency to avoid reality and to escape into the colour and romance of the past. Turn over any production schedule and you will not find a single film that faces up to a modern problem, though there will be many that invite us to take comfort in a flattering restatement of the achievements of our ancestors. Even the war films can no longer be said to be of this generation. *Forgotten Men* eloquently displays the horrors of war, but, of contemporary reference, says nothing more constructive than "Never again!" If it is true, as Philip Lindsay has suggested, that these romantic historical films mirror the mood of our generation, then our generation cannot want at the cinema "films which keep our world before us." It is easier, of course, to turn to the past than to look at the present. It is easier to search out a romantic story from the history books than to select the essential story of to-day and bring it to the screen.

## CONTINENTAL IMPORTS

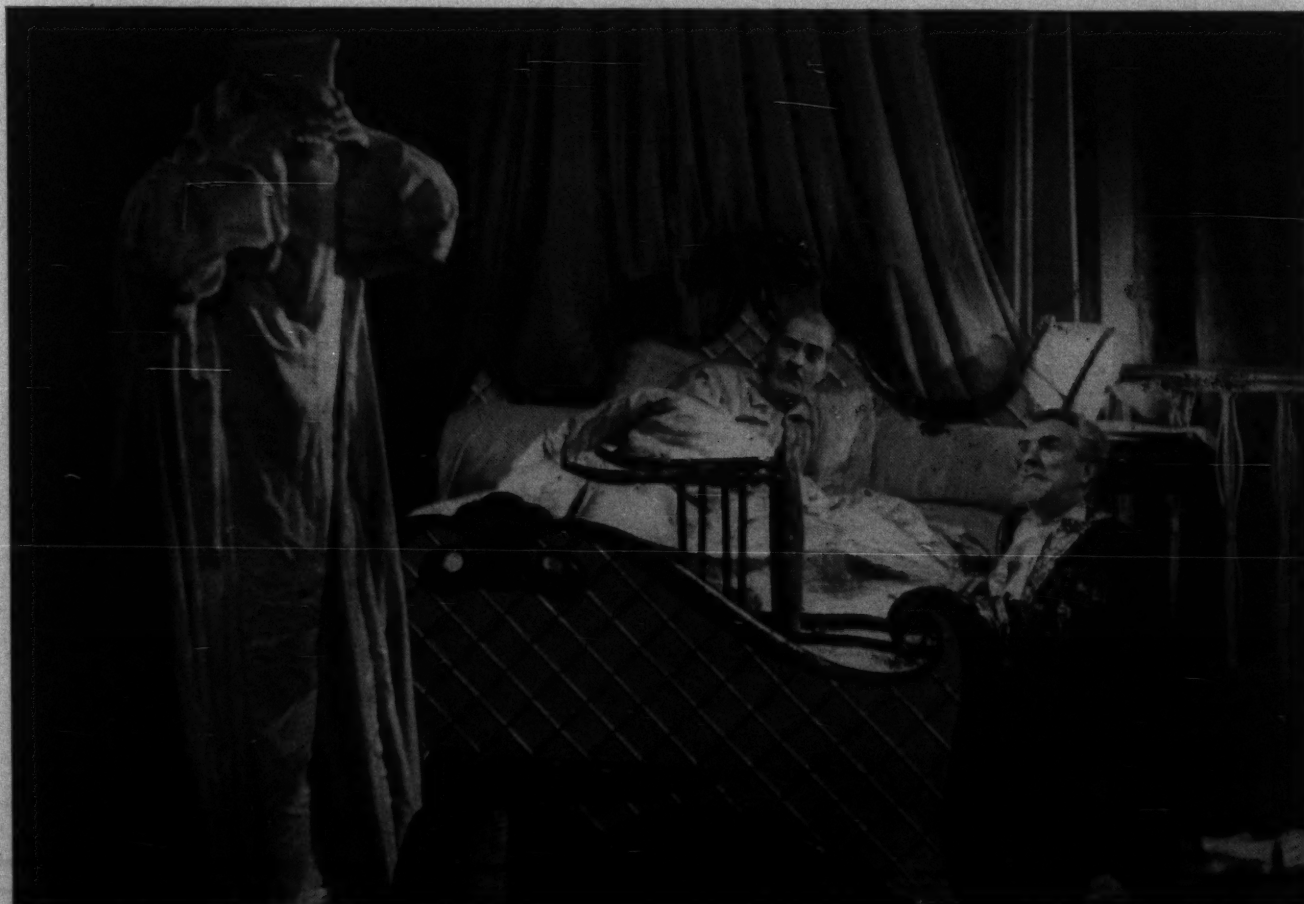
THE importation of continental films has shown a seasonal increase this quarter. Although no film with the possible exception of Clair's *Le Dernier Milliardaire* which, together with *Marie* and *Les Misérables*, is reviewed elsewhere, has produced any startling technical innovations, the general standard has been unusually high.

The most interesting film of those under review here is *Remous*. It is directed by Edmond Greville, an Englishman who played the part of Louis in *Sous les Toits de Paris*, and has acted as assistant to Clair. This is his first essay as a full-blown director of commercial films. The cardinal virtue of *Remous* is its refreshing sparsity of





Above—Vasa Jolovec as Paul in the Czecho-Slovakian film "Reka"  
(Young Love)  
Below—From "Le Dernier Milliardaire," René Clair's satire on financiers  
and dictators





From "The Scarlet Pimpernel," Alexander Korda's latest London Film Production, adapted from the novel by Baroness Orczy. Leslie Howard takes the part of Sir Percy





dialogue. This in a French film would seem to be an example of heroic restraint, but here the restraint is not merely heroic. It is intelligent and apt. The theme—that of a husband physically incapacitated by a motor accident on his honeymoon—invites the use of symbolism, and symbolism is very deftly introduced. The film opens well with a clever suggestion of travel, and is continuously interesting to the end. Look out in particular for the admirably handled cabaret scene. As a whole the film lacks the consistent grip of *Crime Without Passion*, and is rather untidy in its tempo. A little tightening up in this respect would have made it a first-class film. Greville has made an auspicious debut, and is a director to be watched.

*Refugees* proves that, despite the exodus of so much talent from the German studios, the UFA company can still produce an entirely admirable film. Certain aspects of the film may be unpopular—the remarkable resemblance of the hero (Hans Albers) to Captain Goering, propaganda for the Nazi regime, and satire on the League of Nations—but there is no doubt about the quality of the film as a film. It bears the stamp of the German cinema at its best. The direction is by Gustav Ucicky, who directed *Morgenrot*, and the camera work is by Fritz Arno Wagner, who photographed many of Pabst's films, notably *The Loves of Jeanne Ney*.

From Czecho-Slovakia we have had *Reka*. This is a simple, wholly charming film, told deliberately, with a wealth of beautifully photographed scenery. It is a typical example of the sort of film we are now getting from the Continent—good, pleasant entertainment, with no particular aspect outstanding. It poses no special problem, introduces no significant devices in the way of sound, photography, direction or general treatment. But it is all very agreeable and has not the blatancy of the average Hollywood production, or the nullity of the average British production.

The eagerly awaited *Maskerade* has been presented at the Academy. Reports state that it has been a great success on the Continent, particularly in Paris and Berlin. It will deservedly repeat that success in England wherever foreign films are shown. Outwardly it is just another frivolous story of amorous intrigue in a Viennese theatrical-military-artistic setting. A lively lady is sketched clothed solely in a mask and a muff. The sketch is accidentally published, and complications follow. In the middle of the film the artist is shot, and thereafter the characters, previously stereotyped, become flesh and blood people, excellently observed. The film, moving in another dramatic plane, loses none of its essential charm, and proceeds smoothly to an appropriate ending. Perhaps the most attractive thing about the film is that, although it has a light, superficial story, the people in it are, on the whole, surprisingly real. Paula



Wesseiy, a Viennese stage actress, gives a remarkable performance, very cleverly conveying a real depth of character while overtly playing a precisely opposite part. Olga Tschechowa, who was in *The Student of Prague*, gives a beautifully controlled performance. Willy Forst, who was responsible for the foreign version of *Unfinished Symphony*, has made a very smooth job of the direction. There is some delightful music, and the atmosphere and settings are both realistic and impressive.

The Rialto announced a season of continental films and began with *Jeanne*, directed by Tourjansky. This was scarcely an auspicious beginning. The story, which is sincerely told, is about a girl who falls in love with a rather aimless young man whose mother wishes him to marry money. In order to save him from disgrace she undergoes an illegal operation and her child dies. Eventually they marry. The greater part of the film is set in the 'eighties, but it is entirely ruined by an absurd epilogue set in 1934 in which the couple, now elderly, having adopted a daughter, bemoan the fact that their own child (who would have been called Jeanne) died. There is a lot of dialogue, very well translated by means of superimposed titles, and it is excellently acted. Gaby Morlay plays the part of the girl, and her performance should be seen.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES.

## MEN AND JOBS

WITH *Men and Jobs* we have light in the East again. The Russian directors, after a long period of what they would call, no doubt, ideological difficulties, have found material and issues of material which they can warm up as effectively as they did the material and issues of the Civil War. *Men and Jobs* is about workers and, peculiarly for a Russian film, about workers who find their heroism in work. In the great period of *Petersburg* and *Potemkin* they found it in war. The melodramatic excitement of blood and battle prompted and formed the bludgeoning power of their cinema.

Peace-time preoccupations followed inevitably. They were more sober. They, too, involved struggles—but with illiteracy, lack of skill, lack of organization. They involved, for the first time, a certain observation of people and affection for them. The Russian cinema, with its old epileptic technique, wilted visibly. The directors could not interpret, and the technique could not handle, the new situation. Experiment, even failure, were necessary. *Men and Jobs* is significant of the new approach. It demonstrates how a bunch of workmen set themselves to achieve the tempo of American technique in building a dam; and it is not the dam which is the triumph, but the tempo.



They do it humanly; not with sweat on their brows in the old Russian manner, but with sweat at the midriff, in the new. That is the quality of *Men and Jobs*, and it is the most pleasant and most powerful sign in cinema since Pudovkin made a mess of his *Simple Case*. That was undoubtedly the most important failure of all in the period of experiment.

To round off the point, it is well to recall these intermediate films. *The General Line* fell back melodramatically on a poisoning kulak to make drama of co-operative farms. It devoted its intimate observation—by default—to a milk separator. *Earth* similarly introduced a murdering kulak. *Turksib* with drought, desert storm, and snow-bound winter, fell back on the elemental appeal of epic. *Thunder Over Mexico* went, with equal romanticism, to Mexico. *Counterplan* used sabotage; problem enough for the Russians, but still, in a sense, a secondary problem. No one thought, like Sydney, to look in his heart and write, or film, the really intimate and therefore more dramatic problem of a nation at school. The soldier had come from the war, the peasant was in the factory, and a sorry job they were making of their new and bewildering world. In *A Simple Case* Pudovkin knew where the matter lay. He knew they were deserting the home front with their filibustering records of ancient victories, but did not know what to do about it, except by imagistic reference to death and resurrection. So conscious, indeed, was he of the problem that he said it all in *Deserter*. The home front was all in all, however difficult. But, in the very act, he himself deserted, as you will remember, for the machine guns of the Hamburg streets. Back, in other words, to blood and battle again. Even when he described his Russian factory his heart was not really in it, for he did not take the trouble to observe either his factory or his factory workers. *Men and Jobs* is the more important, therefore. It takes the trouble to observe both. The acting is not yet in the highest cinematic tradition, for it is not sufficiently integrated in the action, but that technical plaint is relatively unimportant. The ideological advance means everything.

JOHN GRIERSON.

## THE SONG OF CEYLON

*Production: John Grierson. Direction and Photography: Basil Wright.*

*Assistant Direction: John Taylor. Music: Walter Leigh.*

After twice seeing *The Song of Ceylon* I still find it hard to criticise. The first of its four sections I would call the most powerfully enchanting piece of documentary anyone has yet made. It shows the annual Buddhist pilgrimage up endless steps to the summit of Adam's Peak, where the Buddha set his footprint before leaving the earth. The choice and handling here of realistic detail



show a most sensitive economy, and the patient toil of the climbers is quietly present, without any obvious display of camera tricks, in the visual rhythm. Throughout, there is an occasional commentary drawn from an account of the island written by Robert Knox in the year 1680; the archaic phrases are spoken by Lionel Wendt, of Ceylon, whose remote, grave voice exactly suits the film's atmosphere. This commentary is a brilliant idea, but it means that Wright has had to work within the limits of a very subtle mood not easy to maintain. He is concerned almost entirely with native life, and particularly with native dances, where Buddhism has thinly influenced a much earlier and more primitive religious tradition. He shows us also the fishermen and the harvesters and the women fetching water and other aspects of village life; and as a sound-background to one section there are fragments of disembodied commercial dialogue which briefly suggest the invasions of Western enterprise.

This section seems to me the weakest part of the film, for the voices are ghostly, and the influence of England on Ceylon is not at all ghostly; it is a forcibly transforming influence, leading to fever and conflict. Wright might justifiably have dealt solely with the persistence of native life and custom, away from the ports and towns; but those voices ought to mean more if they are to be there at all. The use of sound and music in other parts of the film is skilful and original, but the effect is always subdued; and Wright, I feel, is inclined to become so absorbed in his material that he forgets his audience. He attempts a symphonic structure, in four movements, but, if the ordinary logic of documentary, based on factual narrative, is to be abandoned, some other kind of logic ought to replace it. A purely imaginative logic, derived from the suggestive power of related images, is not impossible, but Wright brings off this subjective continuity only now and then. Too often there is—so far as I can see—no essential reason why one particular episode should follow another; and it is this discursive tendency—meandering instead of marching—that makes the total effect of the picture not quite satisfying. Too much of the film belongs to Wright's private world; it is too nearly a meditation, not quite enough of a communication.

But I must emphasise that I am applying the highest standards to a film of exceptional quality; a film so full of graphic and expressive detail—for instance, the fisherman whose body lives in the casting of his net—that incidental disappointments are the more evident. The Adam's Peak sequence shows convincingly what can be done in this reticent, reflective style; and its close, with the camera following a water-bird flying over a lake in the early morning, is something I shall always remember.

CHARLES DAVY.



## LES MISERABLES

*Production: Pathé-Natan. Direction: Raymond Bernard. Photography: J. Kruger. Scenario: André Lang and Raymond Bernard. Art Direction: Jean Perrier. Music: Arthur Honegger. With Harry Baur, Charles Vanel, Henry Krauss, Marthe Mellot, Gaby Triquet. Length: 9080 feet.*

Hugo's vast novel has been filmed in two parts; this first instalment takes the plot down to M. Madeleine's escape from prison after the exposure of his convict past. Even so, there is more than enough material here for one picture; and the special merit of Raymond Bernard's direction is that he covers a lot of ground without ever seeming to be in a hurry. Naturally, there must be large omissions, obvious even to someone who, like myself, has not read the book. For instance, the transformation of Jean Valjean, the brutalized convict, into M. Madeleine, the generous, wealthy and respected Mayor of Montreuil, has to be taken for granted; and there are various other rather abrupt transitions. But the main lines of the story are given; and a solid, deliberate treatment is essential to the atmosphere.

The central theme is a contrast between human feeling and legal justice—or between love and revenge—and it is important to avoid rhetorical over-emphasis. The assize-court scene, when M. Madeleine reveals his identity in order to save an old peasant from conviction as Valjean, might easily have fallen into crude melodrama; Bernard saves it by insistence on precisely realistic detail. Much of the film's success, however, is due to the performance of Harry Baur, a massive figure of a man whose acting has, nevertheless, the delicacy which often goes with great reserves of strength under assured control. As Valjean-Madeleine, he stands like a mountain in the midst of the turbulent action; and something of the heroic scale of Hugo's conception receives in him a credible human form. The supporting parts are all well played—the Bishop and the police inspector are particularly good—and the photography is forcible and clear.

*Les Misérables* is said to be the most expensive picture ever made in France; it is, nevertheless, the best French production seen here for many months.

CHARLES DAVY.



## LE DERNIER MILLIARDAIRE

*Production: Pathé-Natan. Scenario and Direction: René Clair. Photography: Rudy Maté and Louis Née. Art Direction: Lucien Aguetane and Lucien Carré. Music: Maurice Jaubert. With Max Dearly, Paul Olivier, Raymond Cordy, José Noguero, Marthe Mellot. Length: 8100 feet.*

Humour either defends or attacks. If it defends, it needs an assured base and a plentiful supply of not really very dangerous enemies. If it attacks, it needs a mood of reckless energy and a solid target. To-day, typical humour attacks; and it is renouncing the indirect attack expressed in the comic-pathetic lament of the outcast—the gesture of derision of the small boy as he runs away—and is developing a conscious purpose of destruction. (Transition from Chaplin to the Marx Brothers.) René Clair belongs in this contemporary camp of destructive satirists; but he has never yet been free to choose a solid target and shoot straight at it.

*Le Dernier Milliardaire* is nearly a satire on financiers and dictators but always, as soon as Clair has let off a few warning shots, someone, rings the bell for the end of the round. The story is about Casinario, a Riviera principality faced with ruin through loss of gambling revenues during the economic depression. M. Banco, a native-born millionaire, is summoned from America; he promises a huge loan in return for the hand of the Princess. On arrival he establishes a dictatorship, gets hit on the head during a palace revolution, and inaugurates a crazy regime of inconsequent autocracy until another crack on the head restores his wits. By this time the Princess has eloped with a band leader, so M. Banco marries the Queen.

One sequence is brilliant: the Casinarians, owing to a currency shortage, resort to barter, and a young man at the Casino, intending to shoot himself, drops his revolver on a winning number and is passed a pile of revolvers by the croupier. Some further barter episodes are good, but soon over; other entertaining touches are numerous but scattered; the music, based on the Casinarian national anthem, is ingeniously diverting; the acting, with Max Dearly as Banco, is competent; but the total effect is thin, jerky, artificial. Clair is like a rebel put into the nursery to play with puppets; and in a time of real dictatorships and real financial oligarchies the antics of puppet imitations—who must not be too realistic—are hardly good enough.

The future of the humour film does not seem to me very bright. When Fascism is in the air—and it is in the air, more or less, in all countries nowadays—the satirist has to play a lone hand; and in the film industry that means impotence.

CHARLES DAVY.



## DEUTSCHLAND ZWISCHEN GESTERN UND HEUTE

*Direction and Photography: Wilfried Basse. Music: Wolfgang Zeller.*

More than any other recently shown, this film reveals the distinctions between the British and Continental understanding of documentary. Cross-sectioning with laborious detail and some rather shaky photography almost every aspect of German life before the Third Reich, it typifies the Continental school of realism by observing only the pictorial surface of the scene and avoiding the main social issues. It was said for Basse by Arnheim in an earlier *Cinema Quarterly* that he intended to show how the styles of living in former times are still affecting modern life, that from the prehistoric forms of a primitive economic system the film leads historically over the Gothic style to Renaissance, from baroque to rococo, from the *Biedermeierzeit* to the complacency of the present middle-class society, the provincial character of which makes possible the crescendo of a modern city's activity. But I doubt very much whether Basse does anything of the sort.

We have all the ingredients of a photographer's album, townspeople and country folk, pastimes and processions, customs and conventions, industry and agriculture, mediaeval city and modern metropolis. They are all well shuffled and labelled, arranged in order like the illustrations of a good picture-book, with the camera roving here and there and roundabout, albeit unsteadily. But, as with Ruttmann, so with Basse. Nothing is related socially. Nothing is said creatively. Nothing really lives, except at twenty-four pictures a second. The long-winded procession of images meanders along without drive or purpose. Running to story-feature length, the film reveals the weakness of a purposeless theme. Unrelated geographically, the images are put together in some form of contrast from which the mildest of implications might be drawn. A few fleeting comments on the childishness of official parades, passing observations on the idiotic behaviourism of the *petite bourgeoisie*, but that is all. It lacks, may I say it, a propagandist urge.

But, most important of all, it exposes beyond argument that no matter how big the subject or how wide the location, documentary must be short, concise and every foot to the point.

PAUL ROTH.



**THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL.** (*British. London Films.*) Alexander Korda's new film has the wit and sophistication characteristic of the London Films product; but, more fortunate than *The Private Life of Don Juan*, which in some degree also had those qualities, it has a rounded and smoothly flowing script and a highly skilled actor as a star attraction. The scenarists—Robert E. Sherwood of *Reunion in Vienna*, S. N. Behrman of *Queen Christina*, and Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis of *The Private Life of Henry VIII*—have retained the liveliest scenes of the Baroness Orczy novel and have added something of humour and sophistication. We are in "the finest age of English taste," and the film always tries to suggest this atmosphere. Were it not for the polished acting, particularly of Leslie Howard, fallow patches, occasionally apparent, would be more plainly revealed; but Howard is studied, resourceful and charming, his timing perfect as always; and he is in skilled company with Nigel Bruce, Raymond Massey and Merle Oberon. It is significant that a major influence on the film is the art direction of Vincent Korda. Harold Young (after Rowland Brown's departure) directed, and the camera-work, which gives the film some picturesque moments, is by Hal Rosson, from M.-G.-M. F. H.

**THE IRON DUKE.** (*British. G.-B.*) "Lives of great men all remind us how like George Arliss they were." This aspect of the film—it was no surprise—apart, it may be said in its favour, that it attempts a bigger subject than the average seven-penny novelette or penny dreadful of the screen. In the course of the spectacular flirting with history, occasionally sentiments are expressed which are capable of modern application—talk among the Allies of demanding indemnity and Wellington's reference in the House of Lords to Britain's implication in European affairs. These, with the superficial account of Wellington's activities during the years 1815-16, give the film, on paper, a slight significance. But on the screen it lacks life and form, and Victor Saville's direction is flat and uninspired. For one moment the film breaks out free from what is probably more the Arliss than the Saville influence: during the Waterloo episode and, particularly, the vivid and exciting charge of the Scots Greys. Here, at least, there is opportunity to appreciate the quality of Curt Courant's photography. F. H.

**MARIE** (*Franco-Hungarian. Osso Films.*)—This French version of a Hungarian national legend, directed by Paul Fejos with Annabella as star, illustrates how disastrous is the naturalistic approach to a theme which demands fanciful treatment. Until near the end, it is a more or less bald account (in the Gaynor tradition) of the hardships endured by a servant girl in search of work. Then the girl is translated to heaven (with *Folies Bergère* backcloth), which results in a disconcerting clash of styles. We have been invited to believe in a real tragedy—betrayed girl dismissed by harsh mistress—and without warning comes the intrusion of fantastic elements. *Marie* appears to have been deliberately made as an "international" film; but it is not sufficiently national to achieve its object. Dialogue is sparsely used to facilitate dubbing, and for no other reason. The problems presented by the sound-track are evaded rather than solved.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

**THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH.** (*British. G.-B.*) Alfred Hitchcock is much more comfortable and successful with this melodrama of a plot to assassinate a foreign statesman in London than he was with the romantic musical comedy of *Waltzes from Vienna*. The story by Charles Bennett and D. B. Wyndham Lewis has at least its implausibilities and is seldom reasonable; and it is a measure of Hitchcock's melodramatic success that he can still create suspense in these cir-





Greta Garbo in "The Painted Veil," an  
adaptation of Somerset Maugham's novel  
directed by Richard Boleslavski



THE PRESS UNANIMOUS  
LONDON FILM  
"THE SCARLET"

● **OBSERVER** :—" I unhesitatingly give the accolade for the year's best picture to " The Scarlet Pimpernel," and it is rather comforting to find, after all the hard things we have had to say from time to time about our native product, that a British production scrambled into 1934 with a ten-day margin has proved to be the most moving, sensitive and consistently entertaining of the year's films."

● **SUNDAY TIMES** :—" As an adventure, or series of adventures, it is unsurpassable. In every respect it constitutes a triumph for the British Film World. It deserves to outrival the popularity of ' Henry VIII.' I recommend this film unreservedly to all."

● **MORNING POST** :—" An extraordinarily fine film steeped in adventure and gallantry."

● **DAILY MAIL** :—" This film is distinguished by the fidelity of the narrative and the general excellence of the acting by a remarkable cast headed by Leslie Howard and Merle Oberon. It is likewise adorned by the magnificent photography of settings of exclusive loveliness. I prophesy a spectacular success wherever it is seen."

● **SUNDAY PICTORIAL** :—" ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' is a film of sheer loveliness."

● **EVENING STANDARD** :—" This is the best film that Korda has produced. There can be no doubt about that. It is the last word in historical films, witty, exciting, romantic and beautiful all in one."

● **NEWS CHRONICLE** :—" In its glamour, suspense, beauty, wit and humour, this must certainly be recommended among the leading pictures of the year."

● **DAILY EXPRESS** :—" It makes you feel young again. Here Leslie Howard is in his element. You will hear sharp little bursts of applause on his behalf as many as three times in the film."

● **DAILY TELEGRAPH** :—" ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' will undoubtedly have a very long run at the Leicester Square Theatre. Alexander Korda should repeat the world-wide success he had with ' Henry VIII.' Indeed, I should not be surprised if ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' does even better."

---

PRODUCED BY ALEXANDER KORDA



ACCLAIM THE LATEST

# PRODUCTION

## PIMPERNEL "

● **THE TIMES** :—" The spirit of the book is in it. It is guileless adventure unspoilt by any of the so-called improvements which a less discreet studio might have invented."

● **SUNDAY EXPRESS** :—" It is the best thing I have ever seen Leslie Howard do, and he has done many good things. I am not sure that it is not the performance of the year."

● **SUNDAY DISPATCH** :—" Charged with audience dynamite ! "

● **SUNDAY REFEREE** :—" ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' is a great British film, a thrilling, wonderful entertainment."

● **DAILY MIRROR** :—" ' The Scarlet Pimpernel,' with its gripping and deftly constructed story and picturesque settings, is a stirring entertainment which should have a world-wide success."

● **DAILY SKETCH** :—" I advise you to make a point of seeing this famous tale so vividly told on the screen."

● **SUNDAY GRAPHIC** :—" Superb is the only word for Leslie Howard's performance."

● **SUNDAY CHRONICLE** :—" Alexander Korda has done it again. Not only is this as good a film as we have ever made, but it shows Leslie Howard as an even better actor than one would have ever suspected. All this film is good—story, settings, general acting, and production."

● **OBSERVER** :—" I should recommend that you make a bee-line for the Leicester Square Theatre and see ' The Scarlet Pimpernel.' This film is not only the best entertainment for the holiday season, but, I would suggest, the most skilful bit of all-round craftsmanship that has ever been done in a British Studio."

● **DAILY HERALD** :—" Korda's fresh triumph—' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' is a grand film."

● **NEWS OF THE WORLD** :—" It is a production which you should enter into your diary with a note—' must see this.' "

● **FILM WEEKLY** :—" If anyone still doubts that Leslie Howard is one of the most polished, resourceful and charming actors who have ever graced the screen, let him see this ! "

ALEXANDER KORDA



# Your Booking Difficulties S O L V E D!

● One of the greatest problems which face organisers of cinema performances in connection with film societies, clubs, institutes, schools, etc., is to know how to obtain the films they want: where to apply for them: how much they cost.

● To overcome this difficulty CINEMA QUARTERLY has established a central organisation, with direct Wardour Street connections, which will not only supply this information but will carry out the necessary negotiations with the appropriate renters.

● Enquiries are constantly being received from all parts of the country, and many societies and organisations are now using this service regularly with complete satisfaction.

● CINEMA QUARTERLY makes no charge for this new service which is intended as a convenience both to readers and to the trade, through whose regular channels all bookings will be arranged.

*The only stipulation is that all enquiries must be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.*

## CINEMA QUARTERLY FILM SERVICE

24 N.W. THISTLE STREET LANE

EDINBURGH, 2

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cumstances. His method, as Charles Davy has pointed out, is to attempt to make melodrama realistic by keying it down into a casual, easy-going mood, with clipped dialogue quietly spoken and a few very obvious displays of emotion; this apparently in the belief that melodramatic events will appear more exciting if they are presented against the background of a normal world. Often, if not always, his method produces the right result—in the "Tabernacle of the Sun" sequence, in the dramatic episode of the Albert Hall concert and in the siege of the gang's barricaded hide-out at Wapping (a reproduction of the Sidney Street affair). The excitement of those moments is in contrast to the artificiality of, for example, the opening scenes in Switzerland. The acting is for the most part simple and straightforward, but there is real subtlety in the performance of Peter Lorre, the Dusseldorf murderer of *M*, as the anarchist leader. With *Murder* in mind, the surprise of the film is the absence of any expressive use of sound.

F. H.

**FORGOTTEN MEN.** (*British. B.I.P.*) Devised and arranged by Norman Lee. Unlike most previous war pictures, whose episodes were staged and artificial, *Forgotten Men* is real and authentic, being composed of pictures taken between 1914 and 1918 by official photographers from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. The material is arranged chronologically, with comment by Sir John Hammerton and by a number of ex-Servicemen who, in awkward interpolations, describe their personal experiences. Detailed documentary is not the aim. Rather the aim of the film is to persuade those who see it that war is waste—waste of human life, destruction of the countryside, the squandering of a nation's resources, a brake on civilization. It is negative peace propaganda: it suggests that war is a wasteful method of settling international disputes, but does not point to another. As a revelation of the horror of war, the film depends on personal reaction. It ought to be shown, not in a super cinema, but in a water-logged, draughty barn.

F. H.

**THE ORIENT CRUISE FILMS:** *Sea Change, Northern Summer, People and Places, Sheltered Waters.*

Cruising has so much become a part of the nation's vacation that sooner or later someone was certain to make the first intelligent cruise film. In actual fact, Alexander Shaw has made a group of four resulting from material gathered by himself and Evelyn Spice on Orient Line cruises during 1934. For the most part nicely observed and intelligently shot, the films certainly succeed in their purpose; that is to say, they give some definite idea of the places you visit and the people you meet as guests of this courteous shipping line, at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of mere plain description. Whether interpreting the drama of a high-dive or creating the leisurely mood of sun-bathing, Shaw has done his job with imagination aided by, in the main, some nice photography from George Noble. With the sound, all is not quite so happy. Some revision might be necessary should the films be eventually put out to the theatres. It is possible that Shaw may have got into his head preconceived ideas of "orchestrated" and "imagistic" uses of sound and, because of his anxiety to keep up with the times, introduced experiments which were not justified by the screen material. This, as well as the fact that two of the films lack construction and do not progress to any dramatic issue, prompts the suggestion that, after the films have had their initial road-showing to restricted audiences, Shaw be given the opportunity to condense his material into a dramatically conceived two-reel documentary for theatre audiences where it would be assured of wide success.

PAUL ROTH.



POST HASTE. (*British. G.P.O. Films. John Grierson.*) An effective method of putting history on the screen has proved elusive and the reconstruction of the past has seldom been done with much satisfaction. In the romantic historical films it has become a matter of fanciful, if not completely irrelevant, detail. Henry's wives and Bruce's spider have taken the place of more significant elements. In recent years, history books have somewhat altered in character, and students have been encouraged to probe into the documents of the past instead of accepting someone's imaginative reconstruction. This new G.P.O. experiment, *Post Haste*, may have interesting repercussions in this connection. It tells of some three hundred years of Post Office history in this country, and is composed almost entirely of period illustrations from the British Museum collection. They are mostly prints and embody a contemporary comment on current affairs. They are carefully photographed and effectively edited by Humphrey Jennings. The result is an intimate, exact and informative account. Occasional sound effects give life to the old prints and a three-part commentary is humorous and instructive. The film effectively points to one successful method of reconstructing the past.

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Andrew Buchanan was the adjudicator at the second Scottish Amateur Film Festival, held under the auspices of the Meteor Film Producing Society in Glasgow. This year the scope was widened and the competitions, divided into four classes, were opened to English as well as Scottish clubs. The prize-winning film was *Seven Till Five*, produced by the Glasgow School of Art Kinecraft Society. This film, which gave an impression of a day in the College, Mr. Buchanan described as a piece of real cinema. Its director, Norman McLaren, revealed an intelligent understanding of film technique. In the class for story films, the award was given to the Meteor Film Society's *Situations Vacant*, a consequence tale of the dismissal of employees from a Glasgow office, directed by Stanley L. Russell. The award in the class for interest films was divided between *Seven Till Five* and *The Outer Isles*, W. H. George's film of the Hebrides. In the class for interest films confined to Scottish entrants, the successful picture was *Edge o' Winter*, a grouping of shots in colour by Ian S. Ross. In the class for sound films was an ambitious news-reel impression of the work of the Glasgow police. The Meteor Society, organisers of the Festival, are to be congratulated on their efforts to encourage amateur film-making and to guide the activities of societies along the most profitable channels.

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We regret to announce the untimely death of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, following an operation for peritonitis. Only thirty-three years of age, his interest in cinema was very real, and he had hoped that his novel "Sunset Song" would be adapted for the screen. He was about to commence the scenario when he became ill. The article printed in this issue was one of the last things he wrote.—N.W.



## CUTTINGS

As the art of the people, the screen must be allowed to reflect life truthfully, and our job is to keep it so instead of allowing it to be forced into vulgarity or saccharine side-channels.—Cecil B. de Mille, *The Cinema*.

Hollywood has never paid British traditions a finer compliment than in the film shown here to-day for the first time, of Major Yeats-Brown's best seller, *Bengal Lancer*. Of the original story nothing has been kept but the title, and there is not a Yogi or a line of mysticism in the whole film.—*Daily Telegraph*.

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# FILM SOCIETIES

**MORE NEW SOCIETIES.** Several new groups are in course of formation. In Wolverhampton, E. L. Packer, 119 Lord Street, and in Swansea, Clifford Leech, University College, will be pleased to hear from anyone interested in plans for these centres. In Scotland, a Federation of Scottish Film Societies has been formed. Membership of the Federation, which it is intended should work in co-operation with the Federation of British Film Societies, is open to organizations in Scotland existing chiefly for the propagation of an interest in the artistic and cultural values of the film. Its main objects are the consolidation of the interests of such societies and the development of the movement in areas where no societies at present exist. The chairman is George Martin Gray, of Aberdeen, and the Hon. Secretary is Forsyth Hardy, 17 S. St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh, 2.

**HAMPSTEAD FILM SOCIETY.** A Film Society has been organized by Hampstead residents with the Everyman Cinema Theatre as its headquarters. J. S. Fairfax-Jones is acting as secretary. The objects of the society are to show films not normally given public exhibition, to revive classic films of the past, and to form a centre for discussion of technical and artistic matters relating to the cinema. Among those on the Council are C. E. M. Joad, Clough Williams-Ellis, Paul Rotha, Lawrence Hanray and Maxwell Ayrton.

**CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY.** The Children's Film Society, which also has the Everyman Cinema Theatre, Hampstead, as its headquarters, is now entering the second half of its first season with a large subscribing membership. The society not only exhibits specially selected films, but makes a point of having a short talk on some aspect of film-making at each performance. Among those who have spoken at performances are Arthur Elton, Mary Field, Stuart Legg and Paul Rotha. The Secretary is Miss C. W. Harley, and among those on the Council are Mrs. Naomi Mitchison, Miss H. B. Tudor Hart, W. T. R. Rawson and Mrs. Amabel Williams-Ellis. The Directors are G. F. Noxon, C. Lawson Reece and J. S. Fairfax-Jones.

**THE FILM SOCIETY,** 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. 28th Oct. *Joie de Vivre*, *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, *Weather Forecast*, *Deutschland zwischen gestern und heute*. 25th Nov. *Beyond this Open Road*, *Cathode Ray Oscillograph*, *Gasparcolor*, *Das Rollende Rad*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Zero de Conduite*. 16th Dec. *A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker*, Three Minute diagrams, *All Quiet in the East*, *Oil Symphony*, *Song of Ceylon*, *The Idea*. 13th Jan. *Rhapsody in Steel*, Three early fragments, *How Talkies Talk*, *Der Tonfilm*, *Nachtliche Ruheströmung*, *Sabra*.

**ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY.** Hon. Sec., A. L. Stephen Mitchell, 15 Golden Square. 18th Nov. *In der Nacht*, *Harlequin*, *Liebelei*. 9th Dec. *Überfall*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*.

**BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY.** Hon. Secs., H. S. Coles and Mrs. E. H. Sale, 3 Cambridge Terrace, Norton-on-Tees. 21st Nov. *Bronx Morning*, Disney's *The Picnic*, *Prenez Garde à la Peinture*. 19th Dec. *Mail*, Disney's *Springtime*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*.

**CROYDON FILM SOCIETY.** Hon. Sec., G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street. 16th Dec. *Harlequin*, *Weather Forecast*, *Road to Life*.

**EDINBURGH FILM GUILD,** 17 S. St. Andrew Street. 28th Oct. *Spring on the Farm*, *Weather Forecast*, *Pett and Pott*, *Charlemagne*. 18th Nov. *Symphony of the Streets*, *Contact*, *Mail*, *Prenez Garde à la Peinture*. 16th Dec. *G.-B. Magazine*, *The Right*



to Write, *New Europe*, *Nature Secret Roots*, *How Talkies Talk*, *Upstream*, *Mickey's Gala Premiere*, *Rapt.* 20th Jan. *Beyond this Open Road*, *Rhapsody in Steel*, *Post Haste*, *The Idea*, *Men and Jobs*.

Lectures have been given by John Grierson on "Sound," Forsyth Hardy on "Production," and Andrew Buchanan on "Direction." Sub-standard versions of *Metropolis* and *The Spy* have also been shown.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec., D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street. 4th Nov. *Mail*, *Lot in Sodom*, *Liebes Kommando*. 25th Nov. *Joyless Street*, *Weather Forecast*, *L'Ordonnance*. 16th Dec. *Royal Windsor*, Disney's *Frolicking Fish*, *Marie*. 13th Jan. *Upstream*, *Pett and Pott*, *Charlemagne*.

Lectures have been given by C. A. Oakley on "The German Cinema," and Clifford Strain on "Amateur Production." At both meetings sub-standard films were shown.

HAMPSTEAD FILM SOCIETY. Sec., J. S. Fairfax-Jones, Everyman Cinema, Hampstead, London, N.W.3. 23rd Dec. *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Gasparcolor*, *Pett and Pott*, *Pred Maturitou*.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College. 17th Nov. *Ballet Aida*, *La Vie d'un Fleuve*, *Reiniger's Carmen*, *Charlemagne*. 15th Dec. *Oberon Overture*, *Early Every Morning*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Thunder over Mexico*, *Plants of the Underworld*.

Lectures have been given by Mary Field on "Nature Films" and Prof. T. H. Pear on "Psychological Aspects of the Film."

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 69 Liverpool Street, Salford. 20th Oct. *Industrial Britain*, *La Maternelle*. 17th Nov. *Ombres sur L'Europe*, *The Living Corpse*. 15th Dec. *Hand Drawn Sound*, *Pacific 231*, *New Europe*, *The Ghost that Never Returns*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool. 11th Oct. *Grass* (Sub-st.). Talk by John Grierson. 18th Oct. *Waxworks* (Sub-st.). 25th Oct. Peter le Neve Foster on "Film-making in Russia," illustrated by films. 29th Oct. Reception to Paul Rotha. 6th Nov. Exhibition of amateur films. 29th Nov. *Crazy Ray* (Sub-st.). 10th, 11th, 12th Dec. *Storm over Asia* (Sub-st.). 20th Dec. *Warning Shadows* (Sub-st.). The following films have also been shown: *Pett and Pott*, *New Europe*, *Tour de Chant*, *Un Monastere*, *Harlequin*, *Pacific 231*. The Society organizes support for outstanding films shown locally.

NORTH LONDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., H. A. Green, 6 Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, London, N.16. 4th Nov. *Canal Barge*, *Bluebottles*, *Carmen*, *Road to Life*. 9th Dec. *Poster Films*, *Cinemazine*, *Schufftan Shots*, *Pett and Pott*, *Joan of Arc*. 6th Jan. *Eyes of Science*, *Lichtertanz*, *Under the City*, *Eternal Triangle*, *Fall of the House of Usher*, *War is Hell*.

Lectures have been given by Andrew Buchanan, A. Vesselo, and Paul Rotha. Other film exhibitions have included *Grass*, G.P.O. films, and an experimental film by H. A. Green, Secretary of the Society.

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. W. Baldwin Fletcher, ICI(Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. 30th Oct. *Wheat Fields of East Anglia*, *The Mascot*, *Fischinger's Hungarian Dance*, *Black Magic*. 4th Dec. *Japan in Four Seasons*, *Cinemazine*, *Silly Symphony*, *Emperor Jones*. 22nd Jan. *Mail*, *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Fourteenth of July*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. 21st Oct. Disney's *Giantland* and *Lullaby Land*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. 4th Nov. *Cable Ship*, *Les Pirates du Rhone*, *Poil de Carotte*. 18th Nov. 6.30 Collection, *The Pawnshop*, Disney's *Pioneer Days*, *Diary of a Revolutionist*. 25th Nov. *Halley's Comet*, *Lot in Sodom*, *Motor Magnate*, *Marie*. 2nd Dec. *Their First Mistake*, Disney's *Moose Hunt*, *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, *Silly Symphony* French version, *Zero de Conduite*.



**SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY**, 21 Ethelburt Avenue, Bassett Green, 12 St. Swithun Street, Winchester. Nov. *Cinemagazine*, *Crazy Ray*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*. 9th Dec. *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Morgenrot*, *Gasparcolor*.

**TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY**, c/o Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle. 11th Nov. *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Zuts' Cartoon, Fishinger's *Hungarian Dance*, Surprise Item, *Road to Life*. 9th Dec. *La Maternelle*.

Discussions are held in the Society's clubroom, where periodical exhibitions of films are also given.

**WEST OF SCOTLAND WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY**. Hon. Sec., James Hough, 16 Balerno Drive, Glasgow, S.W.2. 4th Nov. *Turksib*, *Blue Angel*. 18th Nov. *Fifteenth October*, *The Mighty World*, *Kameradschaft*. 2nd Dec. *Power*, *O'er Hill and Dale*, *Seal Hunters*, *Blue Express*. 23rd Dec. Disney's *Merry Dwarfs*, Ruttmann's *Wonder of the World*, *War is Hell*. 6th Jan. Cartoon, *Battle of Life*, *Virtuous Isidore*. 20th Jan. Disney's *Springtime*, *King Log*, *Storm over Asia*.

Members are now entitled to introduce not more than two guests to each performance at a fee of 1s. 6d. each.

**CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY**, 7 North Terrace, Cambridge, in conjunction with the National Council of Civil Liberties, has convened a meeting to discuss the question of film censorship and the threat to the educational and sub-standard cinema implied in certain proposed new regulations for non-flam films.

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## HARD WORDS TO AMATEURS

INCREASING thousands of feet of film are exposed by amateurs every year. The percentage worth preserving for exhibition to intelligent audiences cannot be more than 10 per cent.—the remaining 90 per cent. being, to put it bluntly, drivel. The animated family album type of exposure can be dismissed at once with giggles and groans; but any amateur who attempts editing deserves enlightenment upon the use of films. There are many so-called film clubs where cine-cameras are used by amateurs to perpetrate meandering efforts meant to emulate the film industry in slickness, glitter, gaudiness and empty-headedness. Of what do these film clubs generally consist? Social club (with an eye to match-making), amateur dramatic society, picnic club and gossip shop. These clubs spend most of their time in producing the very worst kind of stage play, boring to distraction. When finished they are shown to relations, friends and other clubs of a similar nature; and there, useless, they finish. Nothing is said of even superficial import, nobody a tittle the better for making the things and everybody already squabbling about the casting of the next abortion.

Why, then, are these things so? The urge to appear as star; the urge to boast "I direct"; the urge to strut before relations and colleagues at the office—these are some of the reasons. Again, who are prouder or more pleased than they when the neighbours are found hanging on the garden fence, with mouths agape, eyeing the self-conscious simperings of the amateur film club? It seems that the film is merely a vehicle for the appeasement of vanity and suppressed egoisms.

Are there, then, any amateurs doing worth-while jobs? Yes! Let



us be thankful that there are amateur film-makers with something to say, who are more interested in cinema than in themselves. Unfortunately these film-makers are either lone workers, handicapped by lack of capital, or else small groups of semi-professionals who are soon absorbed by the film industry proper. From these people come unpretentious films, simple accounts of honest ordinary affairs, revealing insight into commonplace occurrences happening every day, but unperceived by the other 90 per cent. intent on imitation.

Intent on imitation they are waiting for the commercial companies to begin producing documentary, and then slavishly they will follow in the wake of mediocrity. Always attempting counterfeits and never conveying any other impression than that of wasted effort and complete futility.

Amateurs—some of you 90 per cent.—leave your lights, your pseudo-studios, your clumsy grease paints and gauche acting—run right out of doors and look around at life. Trees, clouds, smoke, birds, everything that moves. Children playing, women washing clothes, men sawing wood, actuality. This is the stuff for your films. Take this material and with heart, mind and imagination weld it into an expression of your view of life.

It isn't the grand things that matter so much as the smaller, unnoticed incidentals. Only from understanding in small things can come that knowledge that enables creation from a vaster and more comprehensive apprehension of things. Come to grips with life. No escaping into tawdry romantics and pseudo-aesthetics.

Do not imagine that these films can be made from combined spiritual experiences. There can be only one director, one who has written and re-written; raved in passion and frustration over the building of the script. This is the director to whom all amateur film-makers must swear loyalty, unquestionable obedience. Only then will amateurs produce films that will make the punjabs in Wardour Street sit up and tremble.

It can be done—it will be done—but I am impatient to see it done now.

LESLIE BEISIEGEL

#### LONDON IFMA GROUP.

Meetings have been taking place every Monday evening in members' flats. Several films have been projected and rushes of *Markets*, being the result of Heino Held's Billingsgate expeditions, which resulted in some first-class shooting considering the bad conditions under which he had to work. Shooting on *Markets* has had to be abandoned owing to bad weather and insufficient light. Some experimental shooting done on Armistice Day round Westminster raised mirth.

Discussions have generally centred on scripts. The first to be submitted was a satire on marching, in which use is made of an experimental form of shooting. This, however, was rejected owing to the majority of the members disagreeing



about the form and dictator-director notions of the script-writer. The second scenario was written by D. J. C. Beck who showed the deceit and duplicity of the armament manufacturers on Armistice Day, and the power of music and uniform in raising the militant spirit.

#### EXHIBITION OF KINEMATOGRAPHY.

This exhibition was held by the Royal Photographic Society at their Galleries in Russell Square, London, during the month of November. The exhibition consisted of a large collection of stills from British films of recent date, many of them still in production, a selection of film personalities and stills from amateur producing societies. Various models of sub-standard projectors both silent and sound, models of the latest cine-cameras, and a 35 mm. super-speed camera. A section of the stills showed the technics of set building, model work, and trick photography used in studio productions. Some stills showed the ingenious faking in the larger scenes of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

In the film competition open to workers on sub-standard, the plaque for Class One was awarded to John Chear for his *Bird Studies* on 9.5. The plaque for Class Two went to G. H. F. Higginson for a 16 mm. film entitled *Pond Life*. Several types of film were projected and some amateur productions. In the ten meetings held, the many new technical processes of colour, trick photography and timing apparatus were demonstrated. Mary Field, Basil Wright, F. Watts and Oliver G. Pike gave lectures on certain aspects of the cinema.

#### KINO.

Kino (86 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1) is an organisation of amateur film-workers using the film as a medium of propagating Communist philosophy. It has an active news-reel group operating much the same as the commercial companies. Two news-reels have been produced dealing with several demonstrations, including the one at Olympia, Air Display, Gresford Colliery Disaster, International Workers' Sports in Paris, etc. Another group is engaged in producing an Anti-Fascist film, and yet another group in the production of features. The last group has made the film *Bread*, described as a drama of the Means Test. Two of their cameramen are to give lessons in cine-camera craft to about six pupils at a time, the fees being low. Kino intend organizing an exhibition of photographs from the Workers' Film and Photo League, in which prizes will be given for the best social as well as technical photographs submitted. A film hire service is now in operation for the distribution of Soviet films.

**SON OF A SOLDIER.** Direction: LEBEDIEV. Reduced from silent 35 mm. copy to 16 mm. Distributors: KINO FILM HIRE SERVICE.

The narrative centres on the life of a boy in the Russia of 1905. The typical school of that period, with its tyrannical old priest and his teaching of Gabriel and the fiery chariot, is done extremely well, but is apt to grow wearisome owing to its length. However, when the boy is (literally) chucked out of school, the real film begins. This delightful rascal gets employment at the local factory, illegally using child labour. The lodger at the boy's home is employed there as an engineer, and together they are absorbed by the then revolutionary ideas of Communism.

When one of the boys is injured by a truck which should have been fitted with brakes, there is a disturbance amongst the workers in the factory which breaks out anew when the Factory Inspector is hurried away by the owner without having seen the exploitation and dangerous practices going on. The Cossacks are called in to quell the disturbance, and on finding a crowd of factory hands assembled, tear down on them with bared sabres.



The boy saves the lodger from being struck down by the Cossack captain by hurling a bolt into the Cossack's eye. He in turn is struck down. Back again in his home, wounded and lying on a couch, he sees his father just returned from the battle with Japan. But before much is said the Cossack captain arrives and threatens the boy, striking him and insulting the father standing stiffly at a salute. The father kills the Cossack by striking him on the head. The film is at an end.

All the factory sets are excellent; the direction is notable for the complete absence of camera-consciousness on the part of the children. Humour, sometimes riotous, runs all through the film.

**IFMA SUMMER SCHOOL.** Peter le Neve Foster.

Here are all the events that happened at Welwyn. Basil Wright and Stuart Legg are seen, and there is some cross-cutting of members dining and pigs wallow about in sties. As is evident, the weather was ideal for filming, obliging clouds waiting for Foster to fit his filters and shoot them, posed gracefully above the charming Conference House. Copies can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary at 12s. 6d.

**GLASGOW INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS' GROUP** is to be reorganized. Experiments with Dufay colour film are to be made, and a documentary dealing with the working of a modern super-cinema is under consideration. The group would welcome new members who are both enthusiasts and workers. The annual subscription is one guinea, and meetings are held at the Neo-film Studio, 42 High Street, Paisley.

All who are responsible for the design, purchase, or maintenance of sound-film apparatus should obtain a copy of "British Standard Specification for Photo-electric Cells of the Emission Type for Sound-Film Apparatus." (London: British Standards Institution, 2s.) There should now no longer be any excuse for misunderstanding between manufacturer and purchaser as to the meaning of such terms as "sensitivity" and "variation of frequency response." An important feature of the specification is the standardization of dimensions.

The Workers' Film and Photo League, 86 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, has been formed to produce its own films recording the industrial and living conditions of British workers and the struggle of the employed and unemployed to improve these conditions; to popularize Russian films; to criticize current commercial films in the press and in its own literature; and to arrange lectures to working-class organizations.

Independent cine-workers should be interested in a new activity of the Film Editorial Service of 130 Wardour Street, W. 1, which is opening an Advisory and a Service Bureau under the direction of Fred Pullin.

The former offers constructive criticism on scenarios or completed films, while the latter attends to such technical matters as cutting, titling, fades, dissolves, wipes, or is prepared if necessary to take the uncut film as it leaves the camera, and produce a properly edited copy ready for presentation.

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